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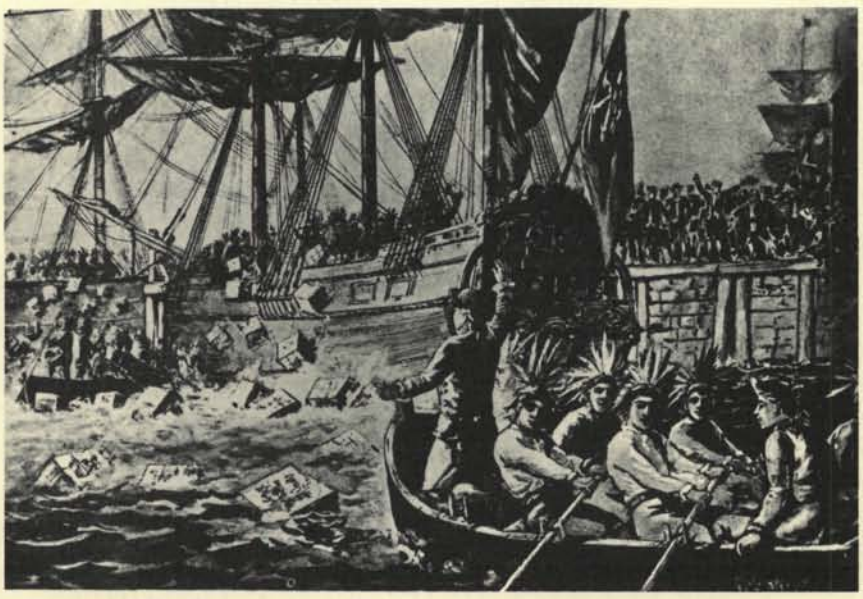

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Volume 43 *Spring, 1974* Number 2

## CONTENTS

THE DESPAIRING OPTIMIST *René Dubos* 188

An Interview with Hiram Haydn *John O'Brien* 199

The Rain, *Poem* *Jack Matthews* 223

Style in History *Peter Gay* 225

The Mind and the Highest Brain-Mechanism *Wilder Penfield* 237

On the Edge of Something, *Poem* *Richard Frost* 247

THE NATIONAL DILEMMA

Position Paper for the American Realist, 1974 *Gerald W. Johnson* 248

The Public Morality: Afterthoughts on Watergate *Vermont Royster* 249

WE DIDN'T MIND HIS SAYING SO

Homage to Joseph Wood Krutch: Tragedy and the Ecological Imperative *William Holtz* 267

Chagall and I Prepare Our Colors, *Poem* *Dave Smith* 280

REAPPRAISALS

Willa Cather: The Light Behind Her Books *Margaret Howe Freydberg* 282

ART IN AMERICA

The Tragic Dilemma of Modern Art *Wilhelmina Van Ness* 288

Comments on Academic Politics 303

THE REVOLVING BOOKSTAND

History: Experience and the Soul of Time *Robert H. Elias* 308

Reviews by *Murray Hartman, Earl Rovit, John Seelye* and *Addison Gayle* 318

THE READER REPLIES 349

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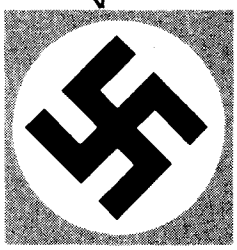

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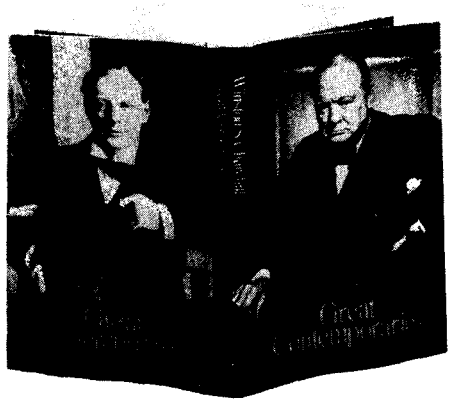

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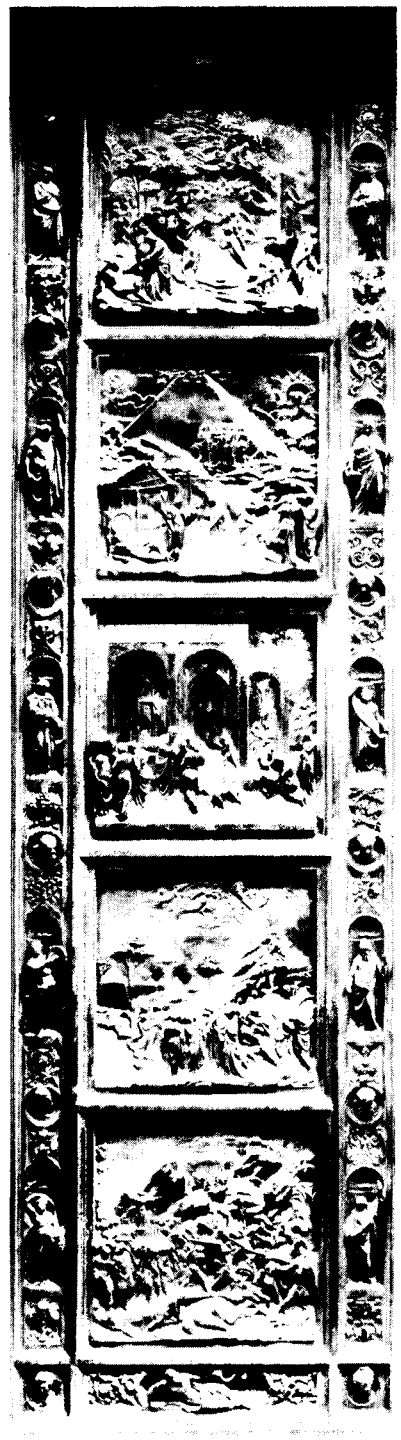

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# *The Despairing Optimist . . . . . .*

RENÉ DUBOS

I visited Japan during the second half of November, a few months after having traveled through most of the state of Israel. The marvelous diversity of the earth is dramatically illustrated by the contrasts between the climates and the lands of these two countries: the rugged wooded mountains and wet lowlands of Japan as against the rainless denuded hills and deserts of Israel. Even more remarkable than these contrasts, however, is the fact that Japan and Israel, so different in appearance and in resources, have profound similarities with regard to human achievements. Both have developed complex religions and philosophies that provide ethical guidance for human relationships. Both have expressed their feelings for nature in artistic forms that convey deep symbolic meanings. Both have reached extremely high levels of agricultural productivity and of scientific technology through the courage, discipline and inventiveness of their people.

I have mentioned Japan and Israel together not to discuss at length their differences and similarities or their respective achievements, but only to illustrate that even the most gifted people, with a wonderful philosophic and artistic past, and with the most sophisticated command of modern knowledge, can degrade their environment for the sake of economic growth. The Tokyo area is notorious for providing some of the worst examples of pollution in the world. And I am afraid that only its smaller scale has so far saved the Tel Aviv area from a similar fate. While the memories of my travel are still fresh, I shall try to outline here some of the general thoughts they have stimulated in me with regard to an environmental philosophy for our times.

I went to Japan at the invitation of NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) to present lectures on the health and cultural aspects of environmental problems and to participate in discussions with Japanese professors and with the general public on the same topic. Lectures and discussions were nationally televised—and I must acknowledge in passing my admiration for the efficiency of the organization and for the quality of the technical execution of these programs.

I had read a good deal about the extent of air and water pollution in modern Japan. But I was not prepared either for the intensity of public concern or for the vigor of public opposition to developments that threaten to cause further environmental degradation. I thought at first that the intensity of this response to the environmental crisis was a peculiarly Japanese phenomenon, but soon realized that I had had a similar surprise in the United States a few months ago.

Early in October, 1973, a friend and former colleague of mine brought me the manuscript of a book that will be published this spring under the title *Environment U.S.A.* The book is an elaborate directory and guide listing the many different kinds of organizations that now exist in the United

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✪ RENÉ DUBOS's latest book will be published in French later this spring. Dr. Dubos has done an English translation of his book, and that version (tentative title: *Choosing to Be Human*) will be published by Scribner's in the fall.



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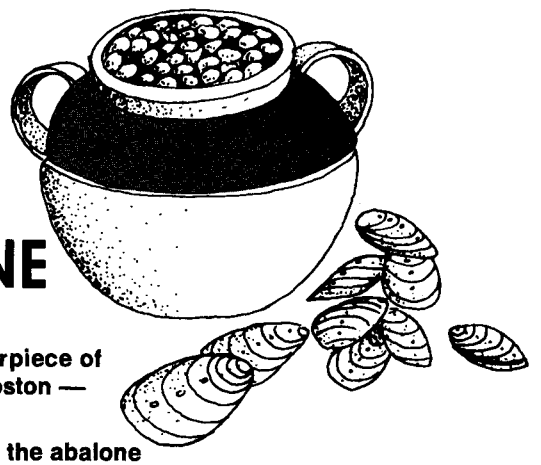

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States for the study and control of environmental problems. It includes citizen groups, industrial corporations, labor unions, educational institutions, official agencies at all levels of federal, state and local government. A very large book it is, and my friend had come to ask me to write a foreword for it. I was at first rather disturbed by his request, because I thought this would be a boring task; a directory does not make for entertaining reading. But then I realized that the need for such a large directory is in itself a phenomenon of great social interest. It illustrates a striking aspect of our times, namely the rapid change from ignorance or indifference, to social concern, and then to large-scale practical action, with regard to environmental problems.

A decade ago the word environment, if it was used at all by the general public, evoked only a vague awareness that the pollution of air and water was reaching objectionable levels. This awareness culminated in the manifestations of Earth Day in April, 1970—manifestations that were highly emotional and visible, but amateurish and rather ineffective. Today in contrast, discussions about the environment immediately bring to mind a multiplicity of institutions and of action programs such as those that are listed in *Environment U.S.A.* To measure the extent of the change that has taken place during the past few years, one need only recall that, not so long ago, it was difficult to prevent tanneries from dumping their wastes into the Croton Aqueduct serving New York City, and that as sophisticated a man as Mayor La Guardia could hardly believe that there was anything wrong in smoke.

It is often stated that the present enthusiasm about environmental improvement is just a fad and will vanish as soon as people begin to experience the cost and the inconveniences that effective control measures will inevitably entail. But I believe that the response of the public to the situation will be far more complex and far more interesting than is suggested by this fad theory. The new element in the situation is that the public has come to regard the right to a healthy and pleasant environment as one of its *natural rights,* to be satisfied by society. There will be much political agitation, of course, about financing and trade-offs of environmental improvement. There will certainly be protests against the measures taken to improve the environment if these measures appear elitist and unfair. The formulation of sound environmental policies will require a kind of social accounting for which our society is not prepared. But while all these difficulties will generate resentment and confusion, they will not make people forget that they are entitled to environmental quality.

History shows, in fact, that social controversies have been part of the environment movement from its very beginnings. Almost a century ago, John Muir pleaded for the protection of trees and the wilderness, purely for the sake of the trees and the wilderness. But Gifford Pinchot, who had been his disciple, broke away from his teachings because he was primarily interested in good management of forests for man's use. Aldo Leopold gained many followers by preaching a land ethic focused on the quality of nature. But George Marsh, who had started the ecological movement, was primarily concerned with the quality of man-made agricultural lands for the sake of man. In our times, the Departments of Agriculture and of the Interior have their own sets of different policies for the use of the environment. But these policies are often in conflict with the social philosophies of the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, which themselves do not agree on all issues. Profound differences of attitudes with regard to the environment occur even in educational programs. Some of these programs are entirely focused on theoretical ecology, where man has no place, or is at best considered an intruder, whereas others emphasize the purely human aspects of environmental problems. The very diversity of the points of view from which environmental problems are being considered in our society reflects the fact that environmental considerations now constitute integral components of virtually all



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major issues in public and private life.

It would be out of place to discuss or even mention here the orthodox approaches to the control of air and water pollution, through better technologies and more effective ways of dealing with undesirable effluents. But I shall say a few words concerning what I regard as a more interesting approach to the problem, namely one that considers industrial and domestic effluents not as wastes, but as wasted *resources*.

In view of the expected worldwide shortage of many different kinds of natural resources, the recycling of wastes will soon become a technological necessity. I believe furthermore that, in the final analysis, recycling will prove to be the most sensible and most effective method of pollution control. Since both Israel and Japan are deficient in many natural resources, and since these two industrial countries have highly developed scientific facilities, they could probably best serve their long-range interests by developing methods for the recycling of both domestic and industrial effluents. And I believe also that this would make them become models for a technological philosophy that is bound to become dominant in the near future all over the world.

During the past decade, there has been an almost universal tendency to identify environmental concern with the damage done by pollution and with the depletion of natural resources. For most laymen and not a few scholars, the thought of environment evokes a world of nightmares and the thousand devils of the ecological crisis. In reality, however, the human environment means everything that is experienced by man, the good as well as the bad of it. The quality of this experience is a large part of the quality of life.

From this point of view an affirmative environmental policy should be based on the fact that human interventions into nature can have beneficial effects and indeed have often been creative. All over the world, the changes brought about by man on the surface of the earth for the past few thousand years have brought out aspects of the wealth and beauty of nature that were hidden or had remained unexpressed in the state of wilderness.

Before human intervention, most of the temperate zone was covered by forests and marshes. It is out of this wilderness which was usually unsuited to human life that man progressively created agricultural lands, pastures, parks and gardens. In many cases, this man-made nature has remained productive, and in a condition of excellent ecological health, for many centuries. In many cases also it now possesses a beauty that was not visible in the state of wilderness. This does not imply that man has really *created* something entirely new from wilderness. The wealth and the beauty of nature were there all the time but only in a potential form; however, man helped them to emerge, to reveal themselves, by creating the conditions under which they could be separated from the overwhelming mass of details and could best be expressed in an idealized form.

During my recent visits to Israel and Japan, for example, I have seen how beautifully farm land can be made from wilderness and how efficiently it can be managed for agricultural production. In Japan I have also marveled at how trees, waters and rocks can be manipulated for aesthetic effects that are different from those of undisturbed nature, yet reveal the hidden beauty and inner truth of nature.

I could, of course, mention many examples of man-made nature in other parts of the world and in the United States in particular. In fact, I could show that practically all the areas in which man has lived since the agricultural revolution ten thousand years ago have been so profoundly transformed that they bear little resemblance to the wilderness out of which they were made. And yet they constitute what we now call "nature." But what I want to emphasize especially is that while examples taken from different parts of the world would be similar in principle, they would be very different in practice. The reason is that nature and the people are different in the



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United States from what they are in Israel, or in Japan, or anywhere else. The spirits of places are different. In fact, the spirit of place differs profoundly from one part of the United States to another—as anyone can perceive who looks at and listens to and smells what each region has to offer beyond standardized motel rooms, drug stores, or fast-food chains.

I believe the time has come to realize that concern with the environment should not be limited to the damage done by pollution, or to the depletion of natural resources. We need a much more creative approach, one that emphasizes not only the maintenance of what we have but also the creative interplay between man and nature. It is this creative interplay that constitutes the spirit of the place, and that makes it come alive.



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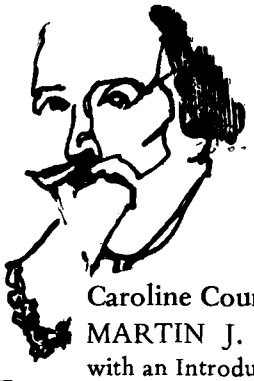


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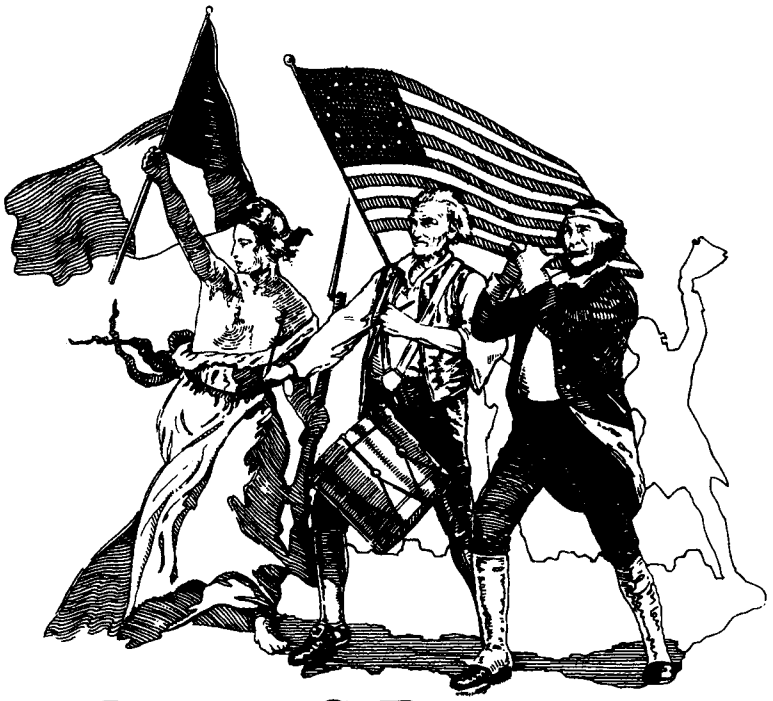

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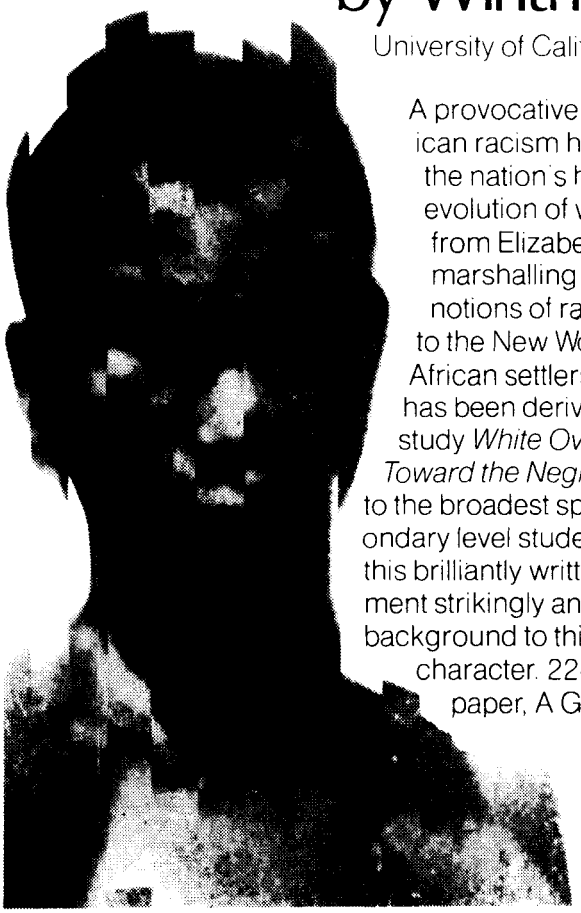

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# An Interview with Hiram Haydn

JOHN O'BRIEN

*Hiram Haydn, editor of* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR *since 1944, died of a heart attack at his home on Martha's Vineyard on December 2, 1973.*

FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS Hiram Haydn and I tried to make arrangements for me to interview him about his fiction. Unlike most other people, I first knew of him as a fiction writer rather than as an editor. I think that fact may have been one reason why we got along so well. John Wideman, for whom Mr. Haydn was an editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, suggested that if I were truly interested in "innovative" fiction, I should look at Hiram Haydn's *Report from the Red Windmill* (1967). I did and was very much impressed by it. I liked it so much that I wrote and told him so. That began a correspondence which flourished on and off for the next two years. In the meantime I read his other novels: *By Nature Free* (1943), *Manhattan Furlough* (1945), *The Time Is Noon* (1948) and *The Hands of Esau* (1962). Somewhat later I looked into *The Counter-Renaissance* (1950) and found it a remarkable and startling interpretation of a period of literature and thought, which, until then, I had felt I understood. It was also an indispensable introduction to Mr. Haydn's fiction.

We finally agreed to meet over the Thanksgiving weekend of 1973. I asked him to find me an inn on Martha's Vineyard that resembled the hotel in *Separate Tables*. He wrote back that he had found just the place David Niven would stay were he to

✪ JOHN O'BRIEN's *Interviews with Black Writers* was published last year. Mr. O'Brien teaches in the Department of English at Aurora College in Illinois.



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come. The first night, a Saturday, we spent at a party given by some of the Haydns' friends. True to his picture on the cover of *Report from the Red Windmill,* Mr. Haydn wore a flannel shirt, the two top buttons undone, and pulled out at the waist. We spent most of the evening off by ourselves because Mr. Haydn felt extremely tired. It gave us an opportunity to talk about a mutual interest—black literature. He recounted stories about his friendships with people like Willard Motley, Saunders Redding and Ernest J. Gaines. With the hope that a good night's sleep would restore him to better spirits, he excused himself early.

But he didn't get that good night's sleep. Mary Haydn called the next morning and said that she would pick me up at 11 a.m. Hiram hadn't slept well but he was determined to do the interview. We began at about noon in his book-lined workroom. On his desk was the manuscript of his memoirs which he was just completing. With several breaks in between so that he could rest, we talked until almost nine o'clock. Later we moved up into the living room where Mr. Haydn could be more comfortable. Tired and in pain, he kept probing his mind to respond to my questions. I suggested a few times that we could finish the interview at some later date, but he would not hear of it. He apologized that I had come all this way just to find him in so bad a condition. But if he felt ill that day, it wasn't apparent in his carefully chosen words or in the memory that was able to recall with preciseness minor details in his novels.

After we had put the tape recorder away, he began to tell me stories that he had said were for "off the tape." Stories about the small conspiracy engineered to insure that *The Hands of Esau* would be a flop, and hilarious stories about the publishing world. And it is Mr. Haydn's dry, ironic, often self-effacing humor that I remember most clearly about him that day. It seemed to be his indication that you were found acceptable to him, that, as he talks about in the interview, you had been permitted behind the walls of his secrecy.

But even more affecting was his enormous warmth and consideration. After a late dinner, for which I had to prune off all the



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fat on leftover roast for him, he insisted on paying for a cab back to the hotel on the other end of the island. Frustrated by an operator at a cab company that was not living up to its advertised twenty-four-hour service, he bellowed, "*Of course,* it's not all right!" Unfortunately for the operator, who seemed to be expressing personal grief at her inability to send a cab, she couldn't see the deep-set smile on his face.

We stood at his front door and made our good-byes. Outside it was raining and the house seemed surrounded by impenetrable darkness. I chastised him for being so damn lovable because how could I ever now be at all objective about his work? And we made plans for me to return to Martha's Vineyard in better times. Of course, the better times never came. A week later Mrs. Wideman called to tell me that Hiram had died in his sleep a few days before.

I hope that this interview will spur readers on to acquaint themselves with Mr. Haydn's novels. Hiram mentioned that *Report from the Red Windmill* might come out in paperback. I hope it does. I hope too that *Q's Trip* will find a publisher. *Windmill* is a brilliantly comic, if at times macabre, novel. Mr. Haydn's "new voice" is at its strongest there, and I hope that it will not go unheard.

—JOHN O'BRIEN

JOHN O'BRIEN: It has always seemed to me that it takes a great amount of courage or egotism to write a novel and send it off to a publisher. Did you feel either when you first began writing?

HIRAM HAYDN: Courage? I don't know. It's been a disease with me. Unlike almost all novelists who want to be taken seriously, I have had this other career of editing and publishing which has really interfered with my own writing. I have edited THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR for thirty years and next year will be my thirtieth in book publishing. And I have done a lot of teaching on the side. My trouble was that I wanted both lives. And I wanted a family, which has been a very important part of my life. I wrote my first



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novel when I was nine. Then when I was twenty and had just finished my first real novel, my father introduced me to an editor who was giving the commencement address at Western Reserve. He proudly told her about me. She was kind enough to give me letters to her own publisher. He was polite, but the novel wasn't very good. I remember the old man at Appleton asking me, "Would you quote me that whole passage from which your title comes?" So, I quoted it to him. Then he said, "That's a big quotation, son, no wonder it was so hard to live up to it."

My first job for many years was teaching at a boy's school out in Cleveland. Thirteen years. In which I wrote, I think, four novels. I could have wallpapered a large room with the rejection slips. I seldom even got a reply. In 1941 I made the big break, left Cleveland, and went to Columbia for the doctorate. During that summer I did three or four chapters in outline form for the publisher that had been the most encouraging, Bobbs-Merrill. After months of deliberation, they gave me a contract. Now when I look back on that contract, it really tickles me because the advance was four hundred dollars, two hundred down and two hundred on delivery. And they tied me up for the same contract and the same figures for my next two novels. I am writing now in my book of memoirs about that memorable old skinflint, Mr. Chambers, who ran the firm. A very learned man. No one has ever clutched a dollar bill tighter than he did. . . . So, I don't think . . . there may have been arrogance in it. But it was so dedicated an obsession from the beginning that I don't think I really worried about getting published. I just knew that I was fated to write novels. When I finally got that first contract, I took the other four novels out into the autumn leaves of North Carolina and burned them. I was very proud of that gesture because the temptation to use scissors and paste was considerable. I've never been sorry I did that.

O'BRIEN: What got you started writing in the first place?

HAYDN: I had a very peculiar childhood which I have spent a good part of my life overcoming. I was subject to diphtheria. I must have had it six times. And I had a mother who was a



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notorious hypochondriac. She didn't let me go to school until I was nine. So, I had almost no friends my own age, and I spent one and a half years in bed. She decided at one point that I had a leakage of the heart. Later a doctor made it quite clear that wasn't true. So I had a lonely childhood up until then. But, as often happens when people decide to reverse the course of events, she suddenly sent me off to one of the toughest public schools anyplace where I was initiated into life and beat up every day [laughing]. This, in a different way, intensified the same thing. I was miserable in school, and even more miserable on the way home. I would get home and go back into my fantasy world. What I wrote ranged from real fantasy to science fiction. And, because I was very fond of history, I wrote a history of the future in which my father's friends played prominent roles. It took years for me to get over those childhood experiences; they were years of great struggle for me but I was determined to do it. In fact, I think I was probably prouder of being high point scorer in senior year of basketball in college than anything else I did in my life [laughing].

O'BRIEN: What do you think pushed you into writing rather than some other art?

HAYDN: I can conceive of someone lonely, with a musical gift, composing. But many of the arts, of course, are not lonely arts. Performing arts for instance. I would have never gotten into that. I didn't seem to have any pictorial ability. And there was a certain sort of family tradition. No one in the family had ever written anything that got very wide attention, but my paternal grandfather had his sermons published. I'll never forget [laughing] the title of one of his books—*Rightening the World.*

O'BRIEN: It sounds ambitious.

HAYDN: And my maternal grandmother wrote stories. Very delicate stories. My father wrote his sermons.

O'BRIEN: Why don't you tell me again that anecdote about your father which you told me before we started recording?

HAYDN: It gives an insight into a very strong, early impression about the whole problem of blacks and whites. It was something



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impressive my father did which had a great effect on me. It involved a neighbor who just moved on the street named Charles Chesnutt.* The rest of the neighbors came to my father, because he was thought to be so nice a man, to ask Mr. Chesnutt to please sell his house. They hadn't known he had Negro blood when he moved in. In a modest facsimile of Christ driving the traders out of the temple, my father, who was badly crippled, stood up, waved his cane at them, told them to get out of his house, and that if one of them so much as spoke to that fine gentleman who lived up here five doors, he would personally thrash him. Which would have been quite impossible. But that hit me early. Oh, I was so proud of him. Off the subject, proceed.

O'BRIEN: This may be too obvious a question, but why did you want to have published what you wrote?

HAYDN: Well, I've always known that the primary purpose of my writing was the satisfaction it gave me, but on the other hand I had my share of vanity and would have liked very much to have a novel published. To show it to my friends [laughing]. In those days it was a very naïve satisfaction.

O'BRIEN: Were you very much discouraged at your initial failures to get published?

HAYDN: Well, I had that entree, so I was given very gentle treatment. Having had that experience with the first one, I found it easier to send the others out. Sometimes I got very discouraged, but I got inured to it.

O'BRIEN: What was it like to have one finally accepted?

HAYDN: I was very happy because, after all, I had been turning them out for thirteen years and nobody had ever taken one. The closest I came was when a firm called Smith and Hollis wrote me and said that they were very much interested, although the book needed a lot of work. They said that if I were coming to New York any time in the next month or so, they would like me to stop in and discuss it with one of their editors. That was on a

* *Editors' note:* This was Charles W. Chesnutt, whose novels and short stories about the black experience were published around the turn of the century. Reappraisals of his work appeared in the Winter 1972/73 issue of the SCHOLAR.



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Friday. The following Monday I cabled and said that I was coming the very next weekend [laughing] and that I would be delighted to stop in then. A very nice woman there really did like quite a bit of it, but Mr. Smith, one of the partners who had just returned from Europe, refused to read it as a part of the final decision and they had to turn it down. That was abysmal. I had gone with such hope.

O'BRIEN: What goes on in a writer's mind while he is waiting to hear from a publisher?

HAYDN: It's hard to remember now. Having had an introduction to four or five publishers softened it, sort of, and thereafter I sent them with quite a bit of hope, being very good at self-deception and believing them to be a lot better than they ever were. I remember more of the disappointment than the fear.

O'BRIEN: What do you think determines a writer's preoccupations in his novels? In your own work there seem to be certain themes which you return to again and again.

HAYDN: Have you read all of those?

O'BRIEN: Yes. I was able to get out-of-print copies at exorbitant prices. However, *Manhattan Furlough* was too expensive, so I had to borrow it.

HAYDN: That's fantastic for a book which was such a financial flop, a remainder item, as they call it. Technically, I think, it has more of a connection with my last two novels than the other early ones do. How did we get into this?

O'BRIEN: About the preoccupations of a writer.

HAYDN: I think that the first one, *By Nature Free,* was the only one with an academic origin. The title comes from Milton. I got very interested in graduate school in the various interpretations of free will or the lack of it. As I look back on it now, that's the one part of the novel I would get rid of. I would try to embody it in the story. *Manhattan Furlough* comes out of a very unhappy time of life. *The Time Is Noon* I finally got up enough courage to reread a year or so ago. I decided that I don't like it. Some of the parts, the more poetical and the more social ones, were not too bad. But the characters lacked three dimensions. . . . Would you



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say from what you've read that you would draw a line and say that something changed after *The Time Is Noon?*

O'BRIEN: There's a great difference between *The Hands of Esau* and your earlier work. You seem to be writing with more abandon and confidence, and you seem more willing to break away from conventions.

HAYDN: That delights me. That really pleases me a lot.

O'BRIEN: Although it's a very long book. . . .

HAYDN: [laughing] Isn't it?

O'BRIEN: . . . it would have been much longer had you written it in the form and style which you used in the earlier novels. But by using such devices as journals and letters, you overcome a number of mechanical problems in trying to develop the character of Walton Herrick. It comes off very well.

HAYDN: It is, of course, an uneven book. Any book that big is uneven. There was an actual biographical break between the novels. I was in several years of psychoanalysis and I didn't get cured [laughing], whatever that is. What I did get, I felt, was a new voice. I gladly express that indebtedness. The journal entries were something I couldn't have done before. I think the greatest weakness in that book was that I was quite determined not to hurt people in my family, friends, and those who had been a real part of my recent life. I spent large fragments of eleven years doing that book. I spent much effort trying to keep it from being too literal and too autobiographical a treatment. The irony, I realized after, is that it would have made almost no difference at all. The journal has an unmistakable autobiographical tone. And I feel certain from the things people have said that the historical part, the history of the family, has the ring of something that was autobiographical. Hence, given those, people just decided that the other was autobiographical too. It didn't have the effect I meant it to at all.

O'BRIEN: I think that one of the few things that bothered me about *Esau* was having Herrick be a political figure. Politicians are such faceless people, perhaps they have to be; we are almost conditioned to assume that they are wearing masks. When they



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appear in novels I have the temptation not to believe in what they say or what they try to be.

HAYDN: I think that may be one of the reasons I didn't get deeper into his political side than I did. But I think I had a reason as naïve as wanting to have Herrick established as at least a minor figure on a larger stage, not just a private man. I'm not sure that worked at all.

O'BRIEN: Was this attempt to make him both a private and public figure one of the constants in your fiction?

HAYDN: Didn't you tell me that you have that issue of *Voyages**?

O'BRIEN: Yes.

HAYDN: Fred Chappell deals with that, and on the whole pretty well. I think always there's the effort of the characters to put their lives in order. The variant in *Manhattan Furlough* was how much more difficult joy was than responsibility and grief. In retrospect I sort of like that. I think that's a fundamental recurring motif. The possibility of being one person, the private and the public brought together.

O'BRIEN: Why did you find it necessary to use somewhat experimental techniques in *The Hands of Esau*?

HAYDN: I think it was finished about 1960, and there's eleven years I spent working on it before that. So it wasn't a phenomenon of the sixties. Again I refer to the fact that this process of analysis stirred up not only this feeling of freedom to use a different voice, to speak for myself in a way that I hadn't, but it also got me interested in self-analysis. Though it was true for me that I didn't get very much out of the actual sessions—I put up some pretty formidable barriers. But I did learn a tremendous amount without realizing it about how the analyst got at things in me. When I quit going to him I began conducting a self-analysis of which *Esau* was a portion. It might amuse you to know that the day I decided I wasn't going to go anymore, the analyst made a comment on my book that infuriated me. I remember thinking when I was leaving his apartment building that he could call me

* In the autumn of 1969, *Voyages* published "A Celebration of Hiram Haydn," a collection of essays about the man and his work.



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anything he wants, he could dig into me any old way at all, but he can't touch my book. What he had done was to endorse the *New York Times* reviewer who said that, after all, if you are really going to write a novel, you have to translate the stuff of your experience into other terms. He said it primarily because the listing for Walton Herrick in *Who's Who* was so much like mine, and because he looked up my paternal grandfather's record which was so much like the one in the book. Actually this is one of the least relevant things about the book. . . . Now, as to the journal, I think I began that after going to the analyst for the summer, back in the middle fifties sometime. Without thinking much about it, I guess I was just continuing the analytic process. And I discovered that the early journal entries were damn good. A lot better than I had done when I was in the shop with the analyst.

O'BRIEN: But what function did the journal have in the novel?

HAYDN: I wanted to come at this man, who had a great deal in common with me but also had a great deal that wasn't me, come at him from as many different ways as possible. Hence the judgment of others in letters and other documents like that. Hence the look into the history of his ancestry on both sides, hence the investigation of what was going on in the present, hence the use of the first-person journal. I wanted to approach him from all sorts of directions, and I did get one very understanding review about that in the *Herald Tribune* by John Chamberlain. He used a metaphor about having a sense of being in a room with this man with all sorts of mirrors set at all kinds of adjustments, with a surprisingly different result from looking into one or another of the mirrors. During those many years people always asked me, "Well, what's this book about that you're taking forever with?" I knew that I had better find an answer. So I said that it's a novel about the ambiguity of personality. I thought that would shut them up [laughing]. But that's what I meant: what many things a man can mean, to himself, to his friends, to his family, to his business associates, to everyone he meets. This, of course, I intended would not produce a final and authentic portrait, but it was an attempt to get at it.



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O'BRIEN: Then you had to have as many different points of view as possible. Did you hope to explore this figure even further in the sequels which you never finished because of the vicious criticism you received for *Esau?*

HAYDN: Yes, that's right, but I was really eager to explore the women too because I didn't think they had been done justice to. It is a shame that I didn't go on with it. Sometime when you are finished with a lot of things and don't have anything better to do, I think you'll agree with me that they're good. They do throw more light on these women. They are not a bit like the fairly contrived or conventional portraits you get in the first book.

O'BRIEN: I wonder about what literary influences might have been at work on you when you wrote *The Hands of Esau.*

HAYDN: I have two great literary heroes. One of them belongs to the world—Shakespeare; the other one I discovered a little over thirty years ago. I spent one Christmas vacation when I was in graduate school reading Montaigne and Rabelais. What a Christmas vacation! I had never read them before. I became absolutely mad about Montaigne. He was the answer for me to all the constricting and confining elements in my early life. Before I finished with my reading I decided that he was the most radical thinker that Western civilization had produced. Why had I never heard of this name? Well, I had heard that he was an urbane, very sophisticated, charming, informal French philosopher. And, of course, it was my background in the counter-Renaissance that enabled me to see that he was so much more. He was the first man who ever wrote a book about himself. That's a big claim, but you go back and look. St. Augustine's was really about the City of God and not about himself; Petrarch's *Letters* are often called that, but in them he's so busy praising himself that he's not getting down to brass tacks. Montaigne in his *Introduction* says that if you are not interested in him, he begs you to desist from turning any further pages. This is a book entirely about himself. Not as a lawyer, not as the mayor of Bordeaux, which he was, not as a political figure in the religious wars in France, not as a marquis in his solitary castle, not as a grammarian,



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but as "I," Montaigne, a unique human being. He says that if the world protests that he thinks too much about himself, he protests the world thinks too little about itself. So, that's what it is: "you touch my book, you touch me." I started it and was disappointed with the first three books because they are formal exercises in the manner of the Greek and Roman writers. Full of learning, full of many, many references. But in the middle of the second book, there is one essay entitled "On the Apologie of Raymond Sebond." Raymond Sebond was a medieval natural theologian who tried to explain everything away by reason. Montaigne's father greatly admired him. This was a sore point with Montaigne and they had many arguments about it. So, he wrote a piece to prove that man didn't live by reason, that he was not essentially a rational creature, that he was essentially an animal with many good and original qualities. But in some ways not nearly so good as some other animals. It's a great long thing saying that from here on he was going to build a model of a man as he is and not as others imagine him to be. That began the second phase which continues in Book Three. He is writing as he promised he was going to before. One of the themes of *The Counter-Renaissance* was that his effort was paralleled in so many different fields. Machiavelli had said that he would not write about ideal principles but that he would write about things as they are. Francis Bacon said that he was going to pursue the nature of scientific matters not by theory but as they really are. But Montaigne was one of the first, and the rest of his essays are his attempt to plumb himself with great care and complete honesty. This excited me no end. He invented the word "essay." It didn't exist before him. He says somewhere near the end of the book that had he real understanding of these matters he would make statements, but, as it is, "I can only make essays." So, really secretly, I was trying in *Esau* to be my own Montaigne. His favorite method was to advance the theories that people had and then knock them down using nothing but his own experience. It's an influence that never left. I dearly loved the man.

O'BRIEN: How can we see this influence of Montaigne in *The Hands of Esau?*



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HAYDN: Well, in the use of the first person in parts, which sections are the most bare me. One good friend said, "Yes, but you leave out all your good parts." So, it was my use of the first person really examining himself.

O'BRIEN: Let me ask you again about the construction of the novel. Why didn't you begin the novel with the story of the grandparents and work on up to the present generation?

HAYDN: I once did. There's a real irony in this. I gave the script in that form to my then editor at Harper, who before the book was finished became my partner at Atheneum. He thought those sections were great, but that they were too heavy and formal to begin a book with. He said to start with something in the present. Later, when I was satisfied that it made artistic sense too, that I really could leap from the present time of the first section into the past and still make sense, then I kept it.

O'BRIEN: How did you decide to work in these things from the past?

HAYDN: I wondered for a long time just what I was going to do with these things from the distant past. I decided to run one at the end of each section.

O'BRIEN: You said that this kind of disruption of the narrative made artistic sense. How so?

HAYDN: If you took the whole deep past, those four sections, and ran them in chronological order at the beginning of the novel, it would be a pretty heavy load. And when I say "heavy load," I don't mean simply for the reader. I mean that there would be no symmetry to it. I don't know if I believe that now, but I did then. Incidentally, I got a lot of criticism for making so formal a structure, for including a table of contents, and so on. But that's a separate story for off the tape. I simply needed a rhythm and a symmetry which were necessary if I were to have a solid structure. I was very ambitious about this book. I really thought I was writing a great big book that would last. And that's why its failure came all the harder for me.

O'BRIEN: Is the self-fulfillment you find in writing enough to counter-balance the harsh criticism you received on a book like *Esau*?



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HAYDN: I think the reason I love writing fiction is that I write to find out what I know, what's there, what "being there" means. It's my experience that whenever I sit down to speculate about something I become so disgusted with the triviality of things that cross my mind that I get angry and quit. But when I write, I hunt. I realize that one great part of my misery as a child was what I thought of then as the need for secrecy. I found a wonderful release in writing *Esau,* a way of externalizing things I had been afraid of. I let myself be made vulnerable in writing that book. And, therefore, filled with the thoughts that we have about ourselves and our own work, it came to me as a blow that reviewers took *Esau* as so exhibitionistic, a desire to explain myself, whereas I thought of it as revelatory. And surely I am not so eccentric that all these things I admitted and recognized didn't have meaning for other people.

O'BRIEN: In that article by Fred Chappell which you mentioned, he suggests that your characters are always trying to discover the truth about themselves. Do you think that that is a motif which links *Esau* to *Report from the Red Windmill?*

HAYDN: Yes. One friend of mine in his interpretation of *Windmill,* when there hadn't been any, thought that it questioned where the moral obligations of the private man end and the moral obligations of the public man begin, and what is the relation between them. Mortimer says somewhere near the end of the book that you can't ask others to do what you're not ready to do yourself. This, in a different form, came to me from *Measure for Measure,* a very tough play which I have never been quite able to put together. It seemed to me clear that what Mortimer was saying was that the real failure to live honestly is to censure or act against deeds by other people which you yourself would do any time you had a chance to. People for centuries have been trying to make a Christian ethic out of it. When Dan Bell was on the SCHOLAR board, he talked about the difference between the Christian ethic of "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you," and the Hebrew ethic of "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you." The supposition is that you do not know for sure what you would like them to do, but if you know



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what they do *not* want done unto themselves, you will have a safer guide than you do the other way.

O'BRIEN: *Windmill* also suggests that what may be good for the individual and what may be good for the society or the race are not usually the same.

HAYDN: That's what my friend meant who talked about the private and the public man.

O'BRIEN: Martin gets into a position in which he is required to do something which is abhorrent to his private sense of morality. But he must exterminate most of the human race if a future is to be insured. It seems to be a dilemma from which there is no way out.

HAYDN: Yes, I think that's true. Most people don't achieve positions of sufficient power to make such a decision on a large scale. Martin did in his little microcosm.

O'BRIEN: I was trying to figure out why Martin dies or had to die at the end of the novel and I wonder if this isn't the answer. Were he to survive. . . .

HAYDN: That's part of what Mortimer says. You do not ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself. And also because of the strange dualism between him and III-1. It's really true, John, that this book wrote me. It was the next step beyond *Esau* in terms of analysis. My initial concern in starting the novel was that I was sick of being told by reviewers that I was overly explicit, that I explained everything away. I thought, "I'll show them," or something equally profound. Then I got into it a little and it took me over. I wrote the first four parts and a little of five between January and April of 1965. Then I came to a halt and used the following summer to finish it. But I had to come to a halt anyway because I had to find out what I had. Much to my surprise, I worked out (and much to my surprise, I haven't saved the paper which I worked it out on) some seven different levels of meaning that were there for me which I had not consciously known about when I wrote it. Then I thought it was necessary to go back and see, since I didn't want to be totally obscure, if these things could be put together. It was one of the things which I discovered then,



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which I had never thought about at all before, that I was putting Martin through a kind of contemporary secular version of the Fourteen Stations of the Cross. I could find nine of them already, and [laughing] I felt honor-bound to find five more before I got through. But Martin is, of course, on one level trying to give an order to his life. His friend or brother is the other half of him. Also, on that level, Celia was his wife in that first life. Some point late in the book he says, "What about the children?" He doesn't mean the children in the camp, but he means their own.

O'BRIEN: *Windmill* is filled with allusions. Many are literary but many are to things in the contemporary world. In one way the novel is about the death-of-God theology of the 1960s, as well as the huge political and social upheavals of that time. Did you find contemporary events working themselves into the novel though you might not have had clear intentions of putting them there? Is there a sense in which the novel was written or dictated by things that were going on while you were composing the book?

HAYDN: I think they may have. I really meant literally what I said about not interfering with what was writing the book. Things got into there which I wasn't consciously thinking about.

O'BRIEN: What kind of literary influences did you feel in writing *Windmill?*

HAYDN: Increasingly with the later work, with the single exception of having Kafka in mind when I started my latest novel, I don't see them clearly. I'm not being like some writers who tell you how original they are. One of the things I do, which isn't too much liked by critics and readers, is to quote extensively and incorporate things into the text from other writers. Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* was a real part of *Windmill.* But [laughing] who has the gall to say "Oh, Shakespeare has been a very great influence on me"? An influence which must have lasted, though not consciously, is that I was mad in my twenties over Dostoevsky. I read him and reread him; I even had to ration the number of times I could read him in a year lest every other novelist seem to me milk and water. Now while I am not aware of this kind of influence directly in these books, I'm quite aware of those writers



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whom I most respect and love, and they may creep in now and then. I remember in one of the early books which I burned, that before starting a dinner scene, I read Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* dinner scene with great loving care. I went to bed, and the next morning I began writing mine.

O'BRIEN: Did you have science fiction in mind when you began writing *Windmill?* I think Chappell comments about the elements of science fiction in the novel.

HAYDN: No, not really. People call it that and people call it allegory. I don't know. For me, any theme or symbol should be rooted in the empirical action of the whole novel and they should grow or blossom out of that. That was true of everything I tried to do until *Windmill.* When it suddenly got off the trolley and began going wild, I just was having too good a time to stop it. I wrote one chapter of that drunk. I wonder if you could tell?

O'BRIEN: No, what was it?

HAYDN: Can't you guess? It was the only time in my life.

O'BRIEN: Different people do different things when they're drunk, but I would guess something having to do with Level 1.

HAYDN: It happens on Level 1 later in the book. It's when Martin has had his more or less pastoral time with Celia and he suddenly gets riled up and gets tired of being "good," and he goes over and encounters the Doll. This leads to confronting her in a secret room with III-4, who starts making them a little torture room. It ends with III-1 looking through the slit in the wall.

O'BRIEN: The character of Virgil functions in so many different ways in the novel.

HAYDN: I'm very fond of him.

O'BRIEN: On one level he has played a part in the creation of this game that is going on, and on another level he is the artist or poet.

HAYDN: On a more superficial level he is also the devil and a rebel.

O'BRIEN: Is there a conflict between these various roles?

HAYDN: He's a poet, because he immediately picks up that reference to *The Divine Comedy* and asks Martin if he would like him



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to be his "Virgil." I may not think of him in any other way except as writer of that manuscript which in retrospect I like. I think I did seven versions of that.

O'BRIEN: Well, in "Virgil's Manuscript" he seems to be the one who is imaginatively recording all that has happened in the world. He is the one with the sense of beauty and the capacity for creating it. So, in a real way, his story is the story of the poet and artist.

HAYDN: Those two go together in a sort of Blakean way. When you write something like that, you eventually sit down and figure out what you are saying. You don't come out with all neat answers. I know that it has something to do with the theory of God's being dead and making God into this kind of blundering, intolerant Old Testament prophet. Virgil is the balance to that. Blake's equivalent of vigor, energy, creativity, poetry, art, beauty and honesty was of the other party from the party of God. He said that Milton belonged to the devil's party though he didn't know it. That's part of it. And if you live as suppositiously as Virgil has for thousands of years, and live as something of an idealist (he kept trying to support causes that didn't work and so on), you finally get tired. So what's left is this tired, tolerant, and basically kind old devil whose point of view is that *of course* people are imperfect and messed up. And he's inclined to forgive and understand and try to help. When he comes to his decision that he's going to let himself go, it's a reversal of the original Christian story about Christ dying for mankind. Virgil quite precisely says that he's dying for himself and that ought to be a good enough lesson.

O'BRIEN: The true devil in the novel turns out to be III-1?

HAYDN: Yes, disengaged intellect is a scary thing to me. Martin's attempt to put that part of himself back together fails. It's that part of himself, his brother, which he rejected when he was a child. Martin misses more and more that other part of himself but, being a different person now, he can't bring it back in terms of his so-called other half. His brother, feeling deserted and needing to work it out all by himself, has grown harder and angrier, and they are now irreconcilable. But I hope it isn't as simplistic as that.



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O'BRIEN: Is this then a further reason why Martin dies in the end, because he cannot restore this other part of himself?

HAYDN: Yes, and because III-1 has not made any effort to bring together the two parts. Therefore, he is still a complete part of Martin even though Martin has been working on getting rid of that part of himself. Hence, for III-1 to die, Martin too must die. His moral judgment on it is that he is responsible, he did have this separate self once, and therefore he has to go where III-1 goes.

O'BRIEN: In the story of Creation which you tell in "Virgil's Manuscript," are you trying to parallel your four figures—Abram and Virgil, She and Her—with the Judeo-Christian version of creation?

HAYDN: To some extent. Eve is equal to She who is God's wife. I therefore think of She or the Madame in the motel (they are really the same character) as the Shekinah, the female part of God in the Hebraic tradition. Abram is the official version of Adam. And Her is Lilith, who always rode the edge of history and who always upset things.

O'BRIEN: Creation begins as a kind of diversion or game for these four figures. But at the very heart of the game is the notion of separation, alienation and dualism. The only way in which the world can function harmoniously is if these four can come together, but they can't because this is the way the game is set up.

HAYDN: Yes.

O'BRIEN: And Martin's inability to bring these two parts of himself together parallels the original gods' inability to do the same?

HAYDN: Exactly.

O'BRIEN: Can you say something more about the figure of She?

HAYDN: I can say this much, She is related to a sort of dominant figure . . . when I say "dominant" I think back to other books and other characters. There is one in *Esau,* physically very different and with a somewhat different emphasis; that's my mother. It seems to me that there are a couple of others. There's one kind of crafty sort in *The Time Is Noon.* On a literal level, Madame or She is not anybody's mother, but [laughing] yes she is. But in my own life,



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in my own career, there is another such woman and the details and experiences of each is very different one from another. But I recognize them as members of one family.

O'BRIEN: Did you intend these four figures, taken together, to be "God"?

HAYDN: On one level, God. But this God is just one of the prophets of that great creative force which runs through the universe. One of the things that has impressed me in the last few years, a lot of which I have encountered through editing THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR where we have such an unusual board, people with such really terrific minds. . . . John A. Wheeler of Princeton is an astrophysicist. If you met him, at least by your third guess, you would say British parliamentarian. He's the one they always turn to when these new theories come out. The black hole and the white hole. He sometimes talks about it at the board meetings, and I try to get him to write about it. The black hole is the one in which a whole galaxy slips out of sight and is no longer detectable by our giant telescopes because it has moved into the opposite antimatter world. The white hole, I don't know after how many light years, is a constellation that shows up in the sky again and its emergence is something that you could make a myth of, a religious myth. The Transfiguration or the Resurrection or whatever. So, presumably, there are many little worlds that play out their bit and then vanish into the black hole and then reemerge. So, your answer is yes and no. But you have to have for most people some kind of analogue in recognizable terms. "God Is Dead." Well, this particular God could be dead, but this is just a microcosm playing out its version.

O'BRIEN: So, when Mortimer sees the flock of birds at the end and identifies it with God, he associates it with the God who transcends the whole universe?

HAYDN: Without himself consciously understanding.

O'BRIEN: The ending of *Windmill,* with its apocalyptic conclusion, appears hopeful. Zero and the children survive. Yet, they seem to be caught in a cyclic movement from which they cannot escape. The children are in the process of re-creating the old myth



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which they can just barely recall their parents telling them of. So, even though God has left the scene, the children remember and may be about to start the game all over again.

HAYDN: The ending is supposed to be ambiguous. You hope they won't, but they certainly might. Several times in the course of the book there are references to Abram which ask, "You mean he is the big one?" He, however, is a pretty parochial God in a small regional drama.

O'BRIEN: Let me ask you about the origin of some of the characters' names. Those designated with numbers refer to the levels of the Windmill from which they come. What about Zero? Is he so called because he is perhaps helping to begin a new world?

HAYDN: He was originally going to be called Ringo. He was my favorite Beatle [laughing].

O'BRIEN: Then how did he become Zero?

HAYDN: I tried to think what is most like Ringo. I got Zero. By the time I got to the end of the novel I had in mind what you said. I'll tell you something humorous about III-2 and III-3. I won't say they're portraits and I won't say they're caricatures, but they're my two former partners at Atheneum [laughing]. That's the only thing of that sort in the book at all. Have you ever thought of the possibility, which I know to be more than a possibility, that many serious historians partly choose that form of writing in order to do all their friends and acquaintances without them being recognized? If it's in the Elizabethan court or in the eighteenth century or wherever, who can say, "That's Joe Zilch"?

O'BRIEN: What about the title of the book?

HAYDN: I'm not positive about the "Red." Moulin Rouge? Don Quixote? On a tour in 1965 I was on my way to Burlington, Vermont. I decided to stop for supper on the way and came into a small town. Right on the edge of town was a motel with the title in appropriate colors, "The Red Windmill." I had my title. I may have had other reasons, but they would only be speculations.

O'BRIEN: Why do you think that *Windmill* has been relatively ignored?

HAYDN: Well, critics say that it's obscure. It's interesting that



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the writers who have appealed to the young, like Richard Brautigan, who is his own man, that the establishment makes him out to be so obscure and difficult. I don't understand how he could be so obscure and yet have young people so wildly embrace him. It seems to me that writers like Bellow, Roth, Malamud and Updike are substantially traditional while they get all the plaudits for being innovators.

O'BRIEN: I think that *Report from the Red Windmill* illustrates a discovery that many so-called experimental writers of the 1960s made, and that is that they need not only tell well-constructed, plotted stories in their fiction.

HAYDN: That *has* happened.

O'BRIEN: They have also recognized, as soon as they step away from this realistic tradition, that a novel can draw connections or relationships between seemingly unrelated materials. If you read things by psychotics, for instance. . . .

HAYDN: Particularly schizophrenics. . . .

O'BRIEN: Yes. We tend to think of these as poetic connections or poetic truths which certainly are not made on a rational level. Fiction writers are becoming aware of this.

HAYDN: Have you seen a book called *The Seamless Web,* by Stanley Burnshaw? This book begins with the premise which has been stated in lots of places but also by Donne, that the body makes the mind. I have written a novel which two people, whom I think terribly bright, loved and laughed inordinately about and another person whom I'm very fond of, John Wideman, read when nobody else was willing to do this and made good editorial suggestions. After all the years I have spent in this world, to be so steadily rejected is a new experience. This novel, which is with my agent, has been turned down by everyone who has seen it so far. They hem and haw about the "august editor" and they don't really go over the book at all. It's called *Q's Trip.* It's the only book which I have ever started definitely with another author in mind—not his story but his way of doing things, and that's Kafka. My hero, and I think it's very appropriate to call him that, is like Kafka's K only in the sense that he doesn't know what the hell is



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going on. This remarkable thing is happening to him and he doesn't know whether to believe it or not. But early on in the book when he first arrives in a Philadelphia hotel and sees what a shabby place it is, he's quite disturbed. So he takes out again this letter on embossed stationary from the Society for the Preservation of Philanthropy. They have a medal which they give once a year for some piece of work of merit and lasting worth. This man has just received a letter assuring him that he has won it and asking him if he is aware of the six others who have won it. That reassures him but all the things that begin happening to him don't reassure him at all. So he sets out trying to find that society. That's quite a problem and he finally finds it. All the rest of the book . . . well, John Wideman said about it that it's a novel of improvisation. He'd never seen one just like it. Every time the hero turns the corner something totally unexpected happens to him and yet it fits together with the rest of it. The subject matter really is what fame may do to you. I'm very fond of the book; I think it's good. But nobody else.



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# *The Rain*

Jack Matthews

The rain has come to stay.
It's like breathing or memory.
It's like a boring obsession.
When it stops, I imagine
I can still see it
gathering darkly in the shadows of trees.
When I look in your hair,
I swear I can see rain waiting to fall.
I see it in basements;
I see it in the spirit of metal,
and in brief naps I take
for the sake of my health
and to wash the light from my eyes.

Don't bother with that banal comfort
of saying that it helps friendly flowers
and increases the water level.
I've lived here before:
it *never* rained then.

And yet,
each morning turned like a clean page;
and even my two shoes,
after waiting all night by my bed,
like faithful watchdogs,
were splendid with hope;
and, oh, the trees glistened



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from their journey through the night;
and even in my dreams
not one king tumbled
soggy, gray, and mad,
from his horse;
and even the horse
was smiling and panoplied with light.

✪ JACK MATTHEWS's latest book is *Pictures of the Journey Back.*



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# Style in History

PETER GAY

STYLE IS A CENTAUR, joining what nature, it would seem, has decreed must be kept apart. It is form and content, woven into the texture of every art and every craft—including history. Apart from a few mechanical tricks of rhetoric, manner is indissolubly linked to matter; style shapes, and in turn is shaped by substance. I have written these essays to anatomize this familiar yet really strange being, style the centaur; the book may be read as an extended critical commentary on Buffon's famous saying that the style is the man.

Buffon's epigram has a beautiful simplicity that makes it both possibly profound and certainly suspect. It seems frivolous, almost inappropriate, to be stylish about style, for it is necessary, and difficult, to disentangle the multiplicity of meanings and the thicket of metaphors that have accrued to the word in the course of centuries. Style, we are told, is the dress of thought and its sinews, its crowning glory and its expressive voice. There appear to be almost as many uses for style as there are users. The critic and the scholar, the lyric poet and the political publicist, each employs style in his own way and for his own purposes: to appreciate elegance and depreciate clumsiness, to decipher obscure passages, to exploit verbal ambiguities, to drive home a partisan point. The historian, who does all of these things—although one wishes that he would keep his lyricism in check and discard his politics when he writes history—encounters style in these and other dimensions. He is a professional writer and a professional reader. As a writer, he is under pressure to become a stylist while remaining a scientist; he must give pleasure without compromising truth. His style may be a

✪ This essay is the introduction to PETER GAY's book, *Style in History,* which is being published by Basic Books this spring. It centers on the style of Gibbon, Ranke, Macaulay and Burckhardt.



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conventional tool, an involuntary confession, or a striking illumination. As a reader, he prizes literary excellence, absorbs facts and interpretations, and explores the words before him for truths working beneath their surface; style may be, for him, an object of gratification, a vehicle of knowledge, or an instrument of diagnosis.

Yet this profusion is an opportunity as much as a problem. As I will show, it is desirable, for the sake of clarity, to discriminate among the varied meanings of style, but it is impossible, for the sake of understanding, to keep them permanently segregated. The use of a single word for many functions need not be a symptom of linguistic poverty; it can be a sign that these functions are related to one another. That the word style should enter diverse combinations—style of thought, style of life and others—without strain, reinforces the impression that the several kinds of style, and style and substance, have much to do with, and to say about, one another. Style is like Ranke's Venetian ambassadors: widely traveled, highly adaptable, superbly informed and, if adroitly interrogated, splendidly indiscreet. For the historian, therefore, the evidential value of style—both in getting and giving evidence—is enormous.

I have said that this book may be read as an extended critical commentary on Buffon's *Le style est l'homme même*. The commentary must be extended, for although an important observation, the epigram is so laconic that we must, as the philosophers say, unpack it. And the commentary must be critical, for Buffon at once says too much and too little. In its day, his bon mot was an energetic, almost unprecedented demand that style not be taken lightly as mere decoration, but seen as reaching into the very foundations of the writer's work.* Yet style is not always the man, certainly not the whole man. If manner and matter are joined in a Catholic marriage, irrevocably, this does not mean that they can

* One of the rare exceptions is Robert Burton's earlier comment that "our style bewrays us," which I have made into the epigraph of this book. The modern view, which I defend here, was well put by Marcel Proust in an interview in 1913: "Style," Proust said, "is in no way a decoration as some people believe; it is not even a matter of technique; it is—as color is with painters—a quality of vision. . . ."—I should note that in what follows, *style* is applied to writers only; obviously, composers, painters, architects, confront stylistic problems in precisely the same way.



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never be apart from each other. Much talk about style centers on the search for literary felicities, and for the traditional, if surprisingly elusive, virtue of clarity.

Moreover, it is a historical fact (which the historian may privately deplore but must professionally investigate like any other) that style has not always been profoundly anchored. There have been those—in advertising, in journalism, in politics, even in publishing—who treat it as an afterthought, as the Gothic facade irrelevantly plastered onto modern concrete walls. Middleton Murry, in *The Problem of Style,* called this practice "the heresy of the man in the street" and thought it "the most popular of all delusions about style." He anatomized this delusion half a century ago, but the heresy had been popular long before and remains as popular as it was when he wrote, in 1922. Makers of verbal artifacts for mass consumption still find it convenient to ask researchers to do research, writers to write it up, and stylists to add the fine touches. Such Balkanization, I need hardly say, fatally divides what needs to be united; the products that such procedures throw on the market are, as we all know, persuasively packaged merchandise, decorated with obsessive puns, exhausted superlatives and unauthentic anecdotes. Style here is a by-product of commercial enterprise; it is by no means the man but the system.

This vast, vulgar subliterature is a valuable reminder to the historian that the word style is not only a term of praise—"that novelist has style"—but also a neutral description—"that novelist works in the naturalist style." He must remember that the very idea of style is infected with a central ambiguity: it must give information as well as pleasure. It opens windows on both truth and beauty—a bewildering double vista. Aesthetically indifferent or aesthetically offensive procedures, as long as they have a certain consistency and characteristic form, partake of style. Second-rate poets, painters—and historians—have a style. So do gangsters perpetrating gangland killings, song writers manufacturing popular hits, priests performing religious ceremonies in standardized ways. The study of style has diagnostic value in all these instances; to the historian they are all valid clues to the past, although not to



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the same historical experiences. If style gives information not about the stylist but about his culture, the historian has no reason to be disappointed. When it comes to subject matter and to evidence, the historian is—or should be—a democrat.

Buffon, of course, was not a democrat, in his view of style or anything else. He was speaking of the literary style of the accomplished writer. And what he meant to say about him, I think, was this: the cultivated manner of the writer instructively expresses his personal past as well as the culture's ways of thinking, feeling, believing and working. The symptomatic value of style is therefore far greater than that of providing insights into literary habits. Style is the pattern in the carpet—the unambiguous indication, to the informed collector, of place and time of origin. It is also the marking on the wings of the butterfly—the unmistakable signature, to the alert botanist, of species and genus. And it is the involuntary gesture of the witness in the dock—the infallible sign, to the observant lawyer, of concealed evidence. To unriddle the style, therefore, is to unriddle the man.

This exegesis makes a beginning, but it remains too elliptical to be conclusive. Both halves of Buffon's epigram, both *style* and *man,* require further explication. The most prominent and, for these essays, most productive kind of style is style in its narrow sense, literary style: the management of sentences, the use of rhetorical devices, the rhythm of narration. Gibbon's pairing of phrases, Ranke's resort to dramatic techniques, Macaulay's reiteration of antitheses, Burckhardt's informal diction, taken by themselves, as single instances, mean what they say on the page. They describe a battle, analyze a political artifice, chronicle a painter's career. But, once characteristic and habitual—that is, recognizable elements in the historian's mode of expression, of his style—they become signposts to larger, deeper matters. Partly idiosyncratic and partly conventional, partly selected and partly imposed by unconscious, professional, or political pressures, the devices of literary style are equally instructive, not always for the conclusive answers they supply but for the fertile questions they raise about the historian's central intentions and overriding interpretations, the state



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of his art, the essential beliefs of his culture—and, perhaps, his insights into his subject.

While I have taken style in its strict sense as my principal witness, my materials have compelled me to reach out to other, related forms of expression, to styles in looser senses of the word. Among the most revealing of these is what I want to call the historian's emotional style, his tone of voice as it emerges in the tension or repose of his phrases, his favorite adjectives, his selection of illustrative anecdotes, his emphases and epigrams. In a tightly regulated stylistic system like Neoclassicism, in which expressive means are severely circumscribed, emotional style has potent diagnostic possibilities, for while accepted canons of rhetoric, say, proscribe "low" epithets for highly placed personages, the range of permissible expressions remains large enough to give room for instructive choices. Gibbon characterizing the Emperor Augustus as "artful" only tells us that Augustus was—or, rather, that Gibbon thought him—artful. But scattered liberally across the pages of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* the word "artful" begins to trail clouds of meaning behind it: it becomes an emblem for Gibbon's cynical appraisal of the empire, a clue not merely to what he saw but what he, as an individual historian, was best equipped to see. In the freer, more loose-jointed writing of the nineteenth century, emotional style retains its capacity to yield dividends to the interpreter: Burckhardt's chilling stories about Renaissance tyrants point to perceptions more general than those the stories are designed to illuminate. They help to outline the contours of Burckhardt's historical vision. In our examination of a historian's emotional style, we come very close to the man indeed.

Neither the historian's selection of expressive techniques nor his unconscious coloring of narrative enjoys privileged status in the inquiry into ends through the understanding of means. The historian's habit of doing research and offering proof—his professional style—invites conclusions subtler and more far-reaching than judgments of competence and diligence. Ranke assiduously visited all accessible archives, Macaulay preferred to spend his time poring over broadsides and printed collections of popular verses;



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Gibbon mastered the history of ancient Rome from modern compilations, Burckhardt the Renaissance from contemporary accounts. To know this is to know something about the sheer validity of each historian's conclusions, but it also delineates his attitude toward his material. Ranke's obsessive, almost religious conscientiousness, which left its distinctive signature on all his work, reflects his sense of history as a grand, dramatic, divinely guided contest, and his sense of the historian as a kind of worldly priest. Gibbon's occasional credulousness, which contrasts so sharply with his pronounced, often malicious skepticism, suggests, not professional laxity, but a will to believe—especially in the wickedness of priests and the lasciviousness of emperors. Like the other styles I have mentioned, professional style, too, points beyond itself.

The reality all these styles point to, the fish that the analyst of style hopes to catch, is, as I have suggested, nothing less than the historian's total perception of the past, the constraints within which he works and the truths he is uniquely capable of grasping. Yet this exalted region—the ultimate destination of stylistics—where matter seems to hold a complete monopoly, is invaded by manner also. I am speaking of the historian's style of thinking, a convenient and telling phrase that relates style to content in more than a mere metaphorical sense. For a historian's most fundamental and therefore least examined assumptions about the nature of the world, its ontological makeup, also have their expressive aspect which may leave its traces in his literary, emotional, or professional style. Yet styles of thought may also find other, more subterranean, channels of communication; a historian need not write, or feel, or work like another and yet think like him and learn from him. Gibbon was deeply indebted to Tacitus' disenchantment, but Gibbon structured his sentences, chose his adjectives, and pursued his research in ways markedly different from the ways of Tacitus. Burckhardt had a pronounced affinity for Hegel's vision of cultural wholes, but it is—fortunately—impossible to mistake a passage, any passage, of the *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* for a passage, any passage, of Hegel's lectures on history.

In general, though, intellectual affinities scatter more clues



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than they did in Gibbon and Burckhardt. The styles I have discussed do not normally lie side by side as strangers, without touching. It is significant that many stylistic qualities are hard to place: do Gibbon's irony or Macaulay's rhetoric form part of their literary or their emotional style? Do Burckhardt's stories serve to disclose his view of the world, his private pessimism, his wish to keep his readers interested, or all three? These questions suggest their answer: styles are a network of clues to one another, and, together, to the man—to the historian at work.

This brings me to the second half of Buffon's epigram. Man lives in several worlds at once, most notably in his private sphere, in the comparatively intimate realm of his craft, and in the wide public domain of his culture.* Like the various dimensions of style, these worlds intersect and continuously impinge upon one another; the private person internalizes the standards of craft and the commands of culture; craft by and large serves culture and obediently expresses its overriding ideals. A mature literary style is a synthesis of all these elements, variously combined; it is, therefore, at once individual and social, private and public, a combination of inherited ways, borrowed elements and unique qualities. That is why the student of style can treat this synthesis analytically, and sort out the threads of which the stylistic tapestry is composed. If, as some romantics were inclined to think, style were simply the outward garb of inner states, the spontaneous overflowing of the springs of creativity, it would yield information about a writer's psyche, nothing more. But these romantics were wrong. To begin with, literary style—and this is the style on which I shall concentrate—can be learned. Writers are not born stylists; they fashion their style through an unceasing effort to overcome dependence and find their own voice.† Normally, the apprentice writer—and

* I intend to explore these worlds, and their meaning for the analysis of historical causation, in a forthcoming book, *Three Variations on the Theme of Cause: Manet, Gropius, Mondrian.*

† See Burckhardt's comment to his friend Friedrich von Tschudi: "My way is, through dependence to independence."



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here, as elsewhere, the historian acts like other writers—discovers the style appropriate to him by first following and then discarding admired models; imitation seems to be an essential phase in the process of self-discovery. Not even in the beginning, then, does writing come wholly from the heart; it comes, for the most part, straight out of other books. The higher naïveté comes later, the fruit of labor that conceals labor.

To say that style can be learned is therefore not precise enough. It is more accurate to say, rather, that style must be learned. It is only in part a gift of talent; beyond that it is an act of will and an exercise of intelligence. It is the tribute that expressiveness pays to discipline. Style is an instrument of the practical reason. Words, of course, do many things: they convey information, they disclose affection, they utter warnings; they are, often, the unedited transcription of emotions into verbal form. But style (although, as we well know, it has also its passional side and its involuntary revelations) is the application of means to an end.

That is why styles have histories, even in individual writers. Gibbon is perhaps an exception; while even he found it necessary to experiment, he cast all his writings, early and late, into the same unmistakable mold. But, then, Gibbon was never young.* For nearly all other writers, style has been, in addition to being an endowment, a conquest; the study of style chronicles and analyzes that conquest. "Style," wrote Gibbon, in his autobiography, "is the image of character." Here is the first indication of the uses that stylistics may have for the historian: it gives him access to a writer's private, psychological world.

This is not the only world that the study of style serves to discover. Writing is an activity pursued within the texture of a literary tradition. Apart from a handful of innovators, most writers, even the greatest, speak in a language that others have made familiar. Even those who, like the Dadaist poets, aim at incomprehensi-

* "I am tempted to enter a protest against the trite and lavish praise of the happiness of our boyish years, which is echoed with so much affectation in the world. That happiness I have never regretted." *The Autobiography of Edward Gibbon,* ed. Dero A. Saunders (1961), p. 68.



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bility, find their vocabulary within the context of a society, no matter how select; their incomprehensibility is their way of communicating—comprehensibly—with the others in their circle. A writer's attitude to his tradition may be compliant, ambivalent or rebellious. He may write as he does because others have written his way before, or because others have *not* written his way before. Whatever his attitude, he cannot be indifferent to the atmosphere that his choice of profession compels him to breathe.

Just as individual styles have a history, style itself has a history. In every epoch, writers have had specified expressive modes available to them. They have always been subject to rules laying down permissible language, to conventions channeling their private preferences, to hierarchies appropriate to any theme. Until modern times—which, in this context, means the 1890s—there have been some things historians must say and others that they would have found it unthinkable to say.

The boundaries within which historians have been compelled to maneuver are of peculiar importance for the history of history. That history is the history of the emancipation of a craft from powerful, normally overpowering, masters. Through long centuries, historians have lived in many houses, borrowing their speech and convictions from their hosts: the theater in Greece, the law courts in Rome, the monastery in the Middle Ages, the salon in the Enlightenment. Ancient, medieval, and early modern historians proffered their works as pieces of rhetoric; they had to satisfy moral demands and employ accepted literary devices. The tradition of eloquence, reinforced and distorted in the early modern era by memories of antique oratory, pervaded historical writings down to the sixteenth and even the seventeenth century, when historians added to this antique rhetorical tradition the eloquence of the pulpit. The philosophe-historians' dependence on polite society in the eighteenth century was actually a giant step toward independence; history became a respectable literary genre among other respectable literary genres.

Then, in the nineteenth century, historians moved into their own house, the university—not, I might add, without some losses.



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But, whatever the losses, the modern autonomy of the historian has increased markedly the range of his stylistic options. As more aspects of the past have become accessible to inquiry, more ways of speaking about the past have become permissible. The relation of the historian to his work has changed; the craftsman has become a professional. Yet in principle, the debt that the individual historian owes to his craft—its dominant traditions, its current debates, its exploratory techniques—has neither increased nor diminished. The study of historians' style, therefore, whether of ancient, medieval or modern practitioners, gives access to the world of their craft or profession.

But it also gives access, finally, to culture itself, of which craftsmanship is only a specialized, and sometimes recalcitrant, representative. This is what Macaulay had in mind in his *History* when he said of Herodotus that he "wrote as it is natural that he should write. He wrote for a nation susceptible, curious, lively, insatiably desirous of novelty and excitement." Reading Herodotus tells us much about the Greece of his day, just as reading Mommsen or Namier tells us much about the Germany or England of their day. Conversely, it also tells us much about their perception of their culture. We cannot read Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte,* with its stunning anachronisms, its Junkers in togas, without sensing within Mommsen, the objective scholar, another Mommsen, the passionate and frustrated political animal. We cannot read Namier's *Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III,* with its resolute anti-intellectualism, its affectionate portrayal of the political microcosm of mid-eighteenth-century England, without detecting in Namier, the minute researcher, a hidden Namier, the lover of English civility so infatuated that he must be a foreigner.

The social information that style provides is by no means infallible; if past words were addressed to the chosen few, and if we have lost the key that will unlock their message, the intentions of the writer, and with them the full bearing of his utterance, will remain opaque. It has long been a commonplace that men often use words to conceal their meaning behind veils of indirection,



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difficulty and ambiguity. In such circumstances, we must first solve the style before we can, with its aid, solve other puzzles: there are times when politics is as much a clue to style as style is a clue to politics. Fortunately this is not a logical but an existential circularity, a symptom of the mutual dependence of style and life and, hence, of the possibility that they may reciprocally illuminate each other.

While one school of intellectual historians, Leo Strauss and his disciples, has made a cottage industry of reading between the lines, reading the lines themselves remains, for the historian, a rewarding enterprise. Erich Auerbach, in his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature,* has shown the path that may take the historian from philology to sociology. It is easy to demonstrate, as he does, that the barbarous Latin of a Merovingian chronicle mirrors, with its impoverished vocabulary, the desperate decay of antique culture. But with his analysis of Tacitus' world view, Auerbach shows that stylistics may trap more elusive game than this. In describing a mutiny, he notes, Tacitus puts elevated words in the mouth of one of the mutineers, sprinkles his report with ethical adjectives, and employs the rhetorical devices current among cultivated orators in the Rome of his day. Auerbach deduces from such linguistic habits Tacitus' blindness to the social and economic pressures bubbling beneath the surface of events. He sees this failure as more than the political bias of an aristocrat confronting the demands of famished soldiers; he sees it, rather, as characteristic for a Roman who does not, and cannot, *see* the lower social orders as full human beings. In sum, the study of style provides a diagnostic instrument as much for the historian's social and cultural, as for his psychological and professional worlds, a decisive clue to their meanings, their limitations—and their insights.

I must add a final word. Style, I said earlier, is sometimes less than the man; often it is more than the man. In examining the styles of four great historians, I am in no way committing myself to the fashionable relativist implications that have normally been drawn from Buffon's epigram. Historians have long been engaged



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in a great, or at least persistent, debate over the essential nature of their craft, and Buffon has been taken as supporting the view that history cannot be a science, but must be an art—a subjective encounter between a literary man and the past, which he reshapes through his private vision and reports in that idiosyncratic manner we call his style. But a personal report many be an objective report. It is even possible that while style reflects the man, the man it reflects is a scientist. I do not want to decide this matter now, and will return to it at the conclusion of these essays. But on this much I want to insist here: there is no reason why style must be the undistorted reflection of the historian's private neurosis, social location or historical epoch. If he has any professional conscience and competence at all, he is bound to say far more about the time he is writing about than the time in which he lives.* Individual stylists develop in rebellion against their past, their environment, even against themselves, and the results are not always predictable. While in all its aspects style is instructive, not all styles are instructive to the same degree; like other writers, a historian normally has two styles, formal and informal, and both are an intermixture of self-expression and self-control. There is no rule book, no prepared recipe, setting down in advance just what the study of style may disclose. All I claim is that it discloses much, and that it will contribute some light to the heated debate over the nature of history.

* I shall examine this point at greater detail in the conclusion; meanwhile, it should be obvious that I reject E. H. Carr's popular simplistic relativism: "When we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it. . . . Before you study the history, study the historian." *What Is History?* (1962), 24, 54. While elsewhere in this book Carr retreats from this extreme position, it is these formulations that have gained wide currency and undeserved acceptance.



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# The Mind and the Highest Brain-Mechanism

WILDER PENFIELD

PHILOSOPHERS OF A CERTAIN SCHOOL might have hoped to silence me before I began to discuss the mind and the brain of man by arguing that, since the mind cannot by its very nature have a position in space, there is only one phenomenon to be considered, namely the brain. That statement, which is contrary to the thinking of the common man, must be looked upon as an unproven hypothesis. Like all such hypotheses, one should undertake to prove it, or to disprove without prejudice.

"That our being should consist of two fundamental elements offers, I suppose, no greater inherent improbability than that it should rest on one only."

It is a quarter of a century since Sir Charles Sherrington wrote these words. We have learned a good deal about man since then, and it is exciting to feel, as I do, that the time has come to look at his two hypotheses, his two "improbabilities." Either brain action explains the mind, or we deal with two fundamental elements.

To see the problem of the nature of the mind more clearly, consider with me this universe of ours in long perspective. It was only after the middle millennia that life appeared—first in unicellular organisms, then gradually in more and more complicated forms, first in the sea and then on the land. It was a very recent event as seen in this long perspective, when evidence

✪ This essay, an excerpt from a book by WILDER PENFIELD entitled *The Mystery of the Mind: A Study of the Physiology of Consciousness,* to be published by Little, Brown, began as an address to the American Philosophical Society, and has since developed into an assessment of present evidence about the nature of man's being. Dr. Penfield, formerly neurophysiologist and neurosurgeon at the Montreal Neurological Institute, is now honorary consultant at that institute. Bibliographic references that will appear in the book have been omitted from this text.



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appeared of the individual's self-awareness and purpose. Today man, with his amazing mind and his vastly complicated brain, seeks to understand the universe about him, and even the nature of life and of consciousness.

Consider the various functional mechanisms that operate within the brain. There is one mechanism that wakens the mind and serves it each time it comes into action after sleep. Whether one adopts a dualist or a monist hypothesis, this mechanism is essential to consciousness. It comes between the mind and the final integration that takes place automatically in the sensory-motor computer and it plays an essential role that may be looked upon as functionally the highest. This recalls the thinking of Hughlings Jackson in regard to the word "high," as applied to levels of function within the brain.

That this *highest mechanism*, which is most closely related to the mind, is truly a functional unit is proven by the fact that epileptic discharge in the gray matter that forms a part of its circuits interferes with its action selectively. During epileptic interference with the function of this gray matter, consciousness vanishes, and with it goes the direction and planning of behavior. That is to say, the mind goes out of action with interference and comes into action with the normal functioning of this mechanism. The gray matter is located in the higher brainstem or diencephalon. Selective discharge in it produces a *petit mal* seizure, an attack of epileptic automatism.

The human automaton, which replaces the man when the highest brain-mechanism is inactivated, is a thing without the capacity to make completely new decisions, without the capacity to form new memory-records, and a thing without that indefinable attribute, a sense of humor. The automaton is incapable of thrilling to the beauty of a sunset or of experiencing contentment, happiness, love, compassion. These, like all awarenesses, are functions of the mind.

The automaton is a thing that makes use of the reflexes and the skills, inborn and acquired, that are housed in the computer. At times it may have a plan that will serve it in place of a purpose for a few minutes. This automatic coordinator that is so often active



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within each of us seems to be the most amazing of all biological computers.

By listening to patients as they describe an experiential flashback, one can understand the complexity and efficiency of the reflex coordinating and integrative action of the brain. In it, the automatic computer and the highest brain-mechanism play interactive roles, selectively inhibitory and purposeful.

Does this explain the action of the mind? Can reflex action in the end, account for it? After years of studying the emerging mechanisms within the human brain, my own answer is "no." Mind comes into action and goes out of action with the highest brain-mechanism, it is true. But the mind is peculiar. It has energy. The form of that energy is different from that of neuronal potentials that travel the axone pathways. There I must leave it.

## *The Stream of Consciousness*

The material used by William James in his reasoning was psychological or philosophical, rather than neurophysiological. The "stream of consciousness," he said, "is a river, forever flowing through a man's conscious waking hours."*

This metaphor may be confusing. A river of water cannot be altered by the man on the bank. But thought and reason and curiosity do cause the stream of consciousness to alter its course and even change its content completely. The biological stream that is hidden away in each of us follows the command of the observer on the bank. A stream it is, and it flows inexorably onward toward the hazy sea that waits for us all at the end of life. But there the similarity between a river and the stream of consciousness breaks down.

The contents of the stream are recorded in the brain, including everything to which the man on the bank paid attention, but none of the things that he ignored. His thoughts are recorded with the sensory material that he accepted. His fears are there and his

* As an undergraduate, majoring in philosophy at Princeton, I was much impressed by my reading of William James's *The Principles of Psychology*. That was, I suppose, the beginning of my curiosity about the brain and the mind of man.



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interpretations are there as well—all recorded by this extraordinary mechanism within the brain.

It is the mind (not the brain) that watches and at the same time directs. Has the mind, then, a memory of its own? No. There is no evidence to suggest it. If the mind had any separate awareness while the highest brain-mechanism is inactive, it could make some use of a memory mechanism of its own. The ghost of Hamlet's father would need such a memory to converse with his own son. But certainly no neurophysiologist is in a position to rationalize that dramatic interview born in William Shakespeare's amazing brain and fathered by his brilliant mind.

*Man's Being—A Choice Between Two Explanations*

Sherrington and his pupils analyzed the integrative action of *inborn reflexes* in the nervous system of *unconscious* animals. He described the remarkable neuronal machine much as it is possessed by man in common with laboratory mammals. It provides for reflex standing, walking and reacting to what the individual sees and hears, feels and smells in his environment. It is an amazing machine. When Sherrington stimulated the cerebral cortex electrically and activated one or another motor mechanism he showed that there was a *facilitation effect*. Subsequent passage of an electric current would produce the same reaction when less strength of current was used. But facilitation of the reaction was temporary. It lasted a matter of seconds or minutes.

Ivan Pavlov and his disciples, on the other hand, studied *conscious animals*. He described conditioned reflexes which the animal acquired because of the fact that anticipation caused it to pay attention to the experience. These reflexes were established and the patterns were preserved by permanent facilitation in the cerebral cortex and nuclear gray matter of the adjacent higher brainstem. This was recognized as the physical basis of the learning of skills and simple forms of reactive behavior. It was assumed to apply to man as well as animal.

Since then, further facts have come to light in the study of *conscious man*. There is the record of conscious experience. It



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makes possible voluntary and automatic recall of past experiences, and it includes those things to which the individual paid attention, nothing he ignored. One can only conclude that conscious attention adds something to action in the brain, action that would otherwise leave no record. It gives to the passage of neuronal potentials an astonishing permanence of facilitation for the later passage of current, as though a trail had been blazed through the seemingly infinite maze of neurone connections. The same principle applies to the acquisition of speech skills and the storing of nonverbal concepts. Permanent facilitation of a patterned sequence in these brain mechanisms is established only when there is a focusing of attention on the phenomenon that corresponds to it in consciousness.

If a previous decision in regard to the focusing of attention is made in the mind, then it is the mind that decides when the facilitating engram is to be added. One may assume that it is the highest brain-mechanism that initiates the brain action associated with that decision. One may assume, too, that the engram-addition is made to conditioned reflexes and to the sequential record of conscious experience simultaneously.

Is there any evidence for the existence of neurone activity within the brain that would account for what the mind does?

Before venturing to give an answer, it may be of interest to refer again to action that the mind seems to carry out independently, and then to reconsider briefly our experience with stimulation of the cortex of conscious patients and our experience of what effects are produced by epileptic discharge in various parts of the brain. This should give some clue if there is a mechanism that explains the mind.

*What the Mind Does.* It is what we have learned to call the mind that seems to focus attention. The mind is aware of what is going on. The mind reasons and makes new decisions. It understands. It acts as though endowed with an energy of its own. It can make decisions and put them into effect by calling upon various brain-mechanisms. It does this by activating neurone mechanisms. This, it seems, could only be brought about by expenditure of energy.



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*What the Patient Thinks.* When I have caused a conscious patient to move his hand by applying an electrode to the motor cortex of one hemisphere, I have often asked him about it. Invariably his response was, "I didn't do that. You did." When I caused him to vocalize, he said, "I didn't make that sound. You pulled it out of me." When I caused the record of the stream of consciousness to run again and so presented to him the replay of his past experience, he marveled that he should be conscious of the past as well as of the present. He was astonished that it should come back to him so completely, with more detail than he could possibly recall voluntarily. He assumed at once that, somehow, the surgeon was responsible for the phenomenon, but he recognized the details as those of his own past experience. When one analyzes such a flashback, it is evident, as I have said above, that only those things to which he paid attention were preserved in this permanently facilitated record.

*What the Electrode Can Do.* I have been alert to the importance of studying the results of electrode stimulation of the brain of each conscious man and have recorded the results as accurately and completely as I could. The electrode can present to the patient various crude sensations. It can cause him to turn head and eyes or to move the limbs or to vocalize and swallow. It may recall vivid re-experience of the past, or present to him an illusion that present experience is familiar or that the things he sees are growing large and coming near. But he remains aloof. He passes judgment on it all. He says "things *seem* familiar," not "I have been through this before." He says, "things are growing larger," but he does not move for fear of being run over. If the electrode moves his right hand, he does not say, "I wanted to move it." He may, however, reach over with the left hand and oppose his action.

There is no place in the cerebral cortex where electrical stimulation will cause a patient to believe or to decide. Of course, there are the areas devoted to speech, whose function is arrested without the production of any distant positive response. Of course, also, there are areas of gray matter in the higher brainstem that the surgeon's stimulating electrode does not explore.



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On the other hand, epileptic discharge can take place in any area of gray matter, from diencephalon to spinal cord (except perhaps the cerebellum). "Jacksonian march" of discharge, from one nucleus of the diencephalon to another, does occur as it does in the cortex.

*Activation by Epileptic Discharge.* There is *no* area of gray matter, as far as my experience goes, in which local epileptic discharge brings to pass what could be called "mind action."

Similarly, I am forced to conclude also that there is no valid evidence that electrical stimulation can activate the mind.

If one stops to consider it, this is an arresting fact. The record of consciousness can be set in motion, complicated though it is, by the electrode or by epileptic discharge. An illusion of interpretation can be produced in the same way. But none of the actions that we attribute to the mind has been initiated by electrode stimulation or epileptic discharge.

If there were a mechanism in the brain that could do what the mind does, one might expect that the mechanism would betray its presence in a convincing manner by some better evidence of epileptic or electrode activation. But of course I must admit that all of this is only negative evidence.

Let us consider what light our positive neurophysiological evidence can throw on the nature of man's being.

If there is only one fundamental element in man's being, then neurone action within the brain must account for all the mind does. The "indispensable substratum" of consciousness is in the higher brainstem. Action in the highest brain-mechanism seems to correspond with that of the mind. This mechanism, as it goes out of action in sleep and resumes action on waking, may switch off the mind and switch it on. It may, one may suggest, do this by supplying and by taking away the energy that might come to the mind from the brain. But to expect the highest brain-mechanism or any set of reflexes, however complicated, to carry out what the mind does, and thus perform all the functions of the mind, is quite absurd.

If that is true, what other explanation can one propose? Only that there is, in fact, a second fundamental element and a second



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supply of energy. But of course on the basis of mind and brain as two semi-independent elements, one would still be forced to assume that the mind makes its impact upon the brain through the highest brain-mechanism. The mind must act upon it and in turn must be acted upon by the highest brain-mechanism. The mind must remember by making use of the brain's recording mechanisms. The mind is present whenever the highest brain-mechanism is functioning normally.

If there are two elements, then there must be, as I have said, two forms of energy, or at least an energy through neuronal conduction and an energy that is operative without such conduction. Could the chemical action in nerve cells in a certain area of the brain produce a second form of energy? A form essentially different from that which is responsible for neuronal conduction? Could this energy bring the mind into action even though we have not as yet discovered a structure for the mind?

These are improbabilities for the dualist to ponder, and he must still deal with many another problem. But the same can be said for the monist. Now that one begins to see the outlines of the partially separable mechanisms taking shape within the brain, and can begin to understand what the reflex mechanisms are capable of doing, the time has come to propose hypotheses and to choose the most reasonable.

For my own part, after years of striving to explain the mind on the basis of brain action alone, I have come to the conclusion that it is simpler (and far easier to be logical) if one adopts the hypothesis that our being does consist of two fundamental elements. If that is true, it could still be true that energy comes to the mind during waking hours through the highest brain-mechanism.

Because it seems to me certain that it will always be quite impossible to explain the mind on the basis of neuronal action within the brain, and because it seems to me that the mind develops and matures independently throughout an individual's life as though it were a continuing element, and because a computer (which the brain is) must be programmed and operated by an agency capable of independent understanding, I am forced to



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choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements. This, to my mind, offers the greatest likelihood of leading us to the final understanding toward which so many stalwart scientists strive.

So many questions still confront us! But to ask them is the first step toward solution. I am confident that they will be answered in time. After adopting the dualist hypothesis one can quite logically call upon the physicists for help. Can electrical energy take two forms? What is the nature of the mind? Has it a structure? Can there be energy without structure? What is electricity? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the mind is present.

As Aristotle expressed it, the mind is "attached to the body." The mind vanishes when the highest brain-mechanism ceases to function due to injury or due to epileptic interference or anaesthetic drug. More than that, the mind vanishes during deep sleep.

*What happens when the mind vanishes?* There are two obvious answers to that question; they arise from Sherrington's two alternatives—whether man's being is to be explained on the basis of one or two elements.

1) If the first alternative is chosen, the mind no longer exists when it vanishes, since it is only a function of brain action. Mind is re-created each time the highest brain-mechanism goes into normal action. In this case, one must try to look upon the mind as the action of a specialized mechanism of the brain, the mechanism that I have called the "highest."

2) Or, if one chooses the second, the dualistic alternative, the mind must be viewed as a basic element in itself. One might, then, call it a *medium,* an *essence,* a *soma.* That is to say, it has a *continuing existence.* On this basis, one must assume that although the mind is silent when it no longer has its special connection to the brain, it exists in the silent intervals and takes over control when the highest brain-mechanism does go into action.

Thus it would seem that this specialized brain-mechanism switches off the power that energizes the mind each time it falls asleep. It switches on the mind when it wakens. This is the daily automatic routine to which all mammals are committed and by



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which the brain recovers from fatigue, recharging its batteries, so to speak.

The highest brain-mechanism switches on this *semi-independent element,* which instantly takes charge during wakefulness, and switches it off in sleep. Does this seem to be an improbable explanation? It is not so improbable, to my mind, as is the alternative expectation—that the highest brain-mechanism should itself understand and should reason and should direct voluntary action and decide where attention should be turned and what the computer must learn and record and reveal on demand.

But in the case of either alternative, the mind has no memory of its own as far as our evidence goes. The brain, like any computer, stores what it has learned during active intervals. All of its records are instantly available to the conscious mind throughout the person's waking life, and in a distorted fashion during the dreams of the half-asleep state.



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# *The Edge of Something*

RICHARD FROST

A dream of Halloween, the walls
orange and black in the retarded light
of the gas lamps. On the stones
a truck crosses, three blocks away,
then a car with soldiers. Nothing.
Burning coal. A latticed window with vines.
In the yellowed Gasthaus, the dead ones are helped away.
The angry butcher gives us his recipe for Bratwurst.
Strangers roll their eyes, their heads pivot.
A waiter prances out. We are led
along a slim roadway, with the moon huge.
We walk on the edge of something. A Strassenbahn,
its front end black except for a milky eye,
waits, empty. We cross in front of it, it clangs,
and we climb on, back toward that place
where we have what the good are given.

Leipzig, 1973

✪ During this academic year, RICHARD FROST has been living in West Germany, on sabbatical leave from his position as professor of English at the State University College, Oneonta, New York. He wrote "The Edge of Something" after a camping trip through several cities and towns in the German Democratic Republic. He has published two collections of poetry, *The Circus Villains* and *Getting Drunk with the Birds.*



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# Position Paper for the American Realist, 1974

GERALD W. JOHNSON

"DEFINE YOUR TERMS, SIR!" If memory serves, it was old McCosh, of Princeton, who used to flatten an argumentative student with that admonition, but, regardless of its source, it is a good one, and so:

*Definition:* what a position paper is, I am not sure, but after reading scores, I deduce that the term is gobbledygook for a propaganda sheet, and proceed on that assumption.

*Definition:* A political realist, at least in this country, is a man whose perception of reality is as clear as that of a jackass of average intelligence and often clearer. Indeed, the realist *is* a jackass from the standpoint of the porcine element on our continent-sized Animal Farm, for he has only a languid interest in getting both forefeet, as well as his snout, into the swill trough. This relative lack of interest is no proof of his moral superiority, but is owing, chiefly, to his observation that an animal as sinewy, swift, and surefooted as the jackass seems to enjoy life more and to live longer than the fattest and greasiest of the swine.

As far as ideology is concerned, the realist may belong to any party, sect, or faction—except the far-out—right or left. He may be a Democrat, a Republican, a conservative, or a liberal, but never a Communist, or a John Bircher, for extremism of any kind is unrealistic.

In the light of these definitions, the position of the American realist in the early fall of 1973 cannot be outlined with two or three

*Continued on page 260*

✪ GERALD W. JOHNSON has described himself, after the fashion of H. G. Wells, as "a journalist exploiting history." His most recent book is *The Imperial Republic.*



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# The Public Morality

## Afterthoughts on Watergate

VERMONT ROYSTER

THE SCANDALS OF THE WATERGATE AFFAIR do not, technically speaking, embrace the scandal of former Vice-President Spiro Agnew, which ended in his resignation as a convicted felon. Mr. Agnew, so far as we know, had nothing to do either with the break-in of the Democratic headquarters at the Watergate complex or with its related events, including the subsequent efforts of a cover-up; indeed, for a time it appeared that alone among high administration officials, Mr. Agnew would be left free of scandal, thanks to the fact that he was deliberately kept outside the White House inner circle. Conversely, none of these involved in Watergate were responsible for Mr. Agnew's trouble; they were of his own making. Moreover, the two affairs were different in kind. Mr. Agnew's was a simple case of bribery and kickbacks, an all-too-familiar felonious behavior among public officials. What has come to be subsumed under the single word Watergate was of another order, an attempt to use governmental power to subvert the political process in the broadest sense of that term.

Nonetheless, the two affairs are related, and not merely in that they were coincident public scandals. In at least one respect, as we shall see, they had a common denominator in the rationalizations by those involved for what they did. In addition the Watergate

*Continued on the next page*

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participants, self-righteous in their freedom from personal greed, reflected moral views more widespread than we care to acknowledge. Neither, therefore, can be treated as isolated incidents of aberrant behavior, or so it seems to me. They are worth examining in a broader context than simply as political scandals because of what they suggest about the state of our public morals.

The scandal of Spiro Agnew is that he is our first vice-president to resign from office with an admission of a felony, income tax evasion. He is not, however, the first vice-president to lie under suspicion of illegal activities involving bribes and kickbacks of the sort the Justice Department also alleged against him. Vice-President John Calhoun in the second Adams administration and Vice-President Schuyler Colfax in the scandal-ridden Grant administration lay under like suspicions. In the Colfax case a special investigating committee looking into alleged bribes came to no conclusion one way or another and the House dropped impeachment proceedings. Calhoun, charged with war profiteering, asked for and received a congressional investigation which found no cause for prosecution.*

Nor is Mr. Agnew the first public official of modern times—including cabinet officers, governors, judges and members of Congress—to be caught in the coils of the law. Apart from those convicted, he is not the first, or only, public official to accept "gifts" from those doing business with the government; that is, he did not invent the system of payoffs from contractors when he became Baltimore County executive and, later, governor of Maryland.

Indeed, in his postresignation apologia, Mr. Agnew made much of the fact that he found it "customary" for engineers and contractors to make substantial payments to state officials in return for, or at least in parallel with, state contracts. The Justice Department conceded as much; the net that caught Mr. Agnew also entangled predecessors and successors. And nobody familiar with politics, especially state government politics, will deny the prevalence of the custom, not only in Maryland but almost every-

* Calhoun did later resign, the only vice-president to have done so prior to Spiro Agnew, but this was unrelated to the investigation. He resigned to become senator from South Carolina.



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where. A cynic might say that this sort of thing is as American as apple pie.

Those involved in the Watergate affair didn't invent either political dirty tricks or the wholesale sowing of campaign millions. Campaign spying and campaign tricks, including forged documents to use against opponents, are as old as politics. Two famous examples come readily to mind: the smearing of Al Smith with fake photographs and the smearing of Herbert Hoover by rearranging phrases out of his speeches to make it appear he had said things he didn't say. More recently a "missile gap" was invented for the 1960 campaign, and in that election there is a suspicion that votes were actually stolen in Texas and Illinois; nor was the 1964 campaign against Barry Goldwater a model of propriety. As for wiretapping and covert surveillance by those in authority against their political enemies, real or imagined, previous administrations have used them to keep tabs on certain people, ranging from Jimmy Hoffa to Martin Luther King.

So to a certain extent it is true—and might as well be conceded —that there is a touch of applying ex post facto ethical standards in the public condemnation of Mr. Agnew and the Watergate crew, as well as with the indignation over President Nixon's finances. That is, they are being held accountable for conduct that in the past has been too much tolerated or at least cynically shrugged off. The peculiar record of James Curley did not stop voters from repeatedly reelecting him mayor of Boston, congressman and governor. The use of Kennedy family money in wholesale lots to win the West Virginia primary from Hubert Humphrey was widely reported at the time; it had little effect on the political fortunes of John Kennedy. It was well known that Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson spent most of their careers on small government salaries and nonetheless ended up quite well-to-do, Johnson in the millionaire class. There was no great indignation over Eisenhower's Gettysburg farm or Johnson's Texas ranch, both of which cost taxpayers for "security" and other improvements, nor was there a public outcry for a look at their tax returns or an accounting of their private finances.

Let there be no misunderstanding. To recall these past ex-



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amples is not in any way to excuse Mr. Agnew, the Committee to Reelect the President or those involved at the White House for their conduct. It does, however, suggest something about the public attitude toward past conduct of those in public office, including profiteering from office. It suggests an acceptance of much of it, or at least an apathy toward it. And that surely says something about the state of our public morality.

To all this the Watergate affair and its related matters add an extra dimension and pose an extra puzzle. The Agnew scandal was a case of simple greed, the inability to resist the temptation of sticky fingers, perhaps made more tawdry by the fact that the sums involved were picayune. In the Watergate affair, so far as we now know, nobody stole any money.* With all those millions of campaign dollars floating around, and with the laxest sort of accountability procedures in effect, none of it stuck to anybody's fingers. Nobody even stuffed a ballot box, that other familiar political sport. That is, the element of greed seems to have been totally lacking. As political scandals go, that has made it an unusual one indeed.

The first puzzle this raises is why it all happened. Agnew's transgressions are at least understandable. But how could men who were not motivated by personal gain come to do such things? What motivated them? What rationalizations could they use to justify their conduct to themselves?

It would be comforting if we could answer these questions simply by saying they were all bad men, devoid of ordinary moral sense, who by unhappy fortune happened to come to political power at a particular time. The comfort in this would be that if after all the culprits are identified, the appropriate ones jailed or otherwise punished and the president—if he too proves personally culpable—is removed from office, then we could dismiss the whole affair as a passing aberration.

It is not, I think, so simple. At any rate, by the lights by which we usually judge men, none of these could be called evil men. On the contrary, they seem to have been men of the utmost probity

* On the evidence as of February 25, 1974.



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in their personal lives, men whom any of us—before all this happened—would have been glad to have as friends and neighbors. One of them had spent a lifetime in the law, another many years handling other people's money, with never a moment of distrust for either. Among the others there were men who were free even of the small frailties of men in their personal behavior. All, so far as anyone could see beforehand, were men who loved their country and wished to serve it well.

So when we look for the moral fault that led them to such dreadful deeds, the only one I can see that could fit them all is the moral confusion between means and ends. They began, I am sure, with what they thought were worthy ends and then, thinking so, came to think these worthy ends justified the means they used. At least one witness before the Senate Watergate Committee made this rationalization explicit. Consider this colloquy between John Mitchell and Senator Talmadge.

Senator Talmadge: "Am I to understand . . . that you placed the expediency of the next election above your responsibilities as an intimate to advise the President of the peril that surrounded him? Here was the deputy campaign director involved, here were his two closest associates in his office involved, all around him were people involved in crime, perjury, accessory after the fact, and you deliberately refused to tell him that. Would you state that the expediency of the election was more important than that?"

Mr. Mitchell: "Senator, I think you have put it exactly correct. In my mind the re-election of Richard Nixon, compared with what was available on the other side, was so much more important that I put it in just that context."*

It would be hard to find a clearer statement of the viewpoint that the end justifies the means.

We confront, then, two moral questions raised by our year of scandal in Washington. One is how much does the prevalence of behavior excuse a behavior; the other is to what extent does the worthiness of an objective justify the means to achieve it. And again it would be comforting if we could treat the answers given by these

* As quoted in *Watergate: Chronology of a Crisis,* published by *Congressional Quarterly.*



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particular people, which we all deplore, as being due only to their own moral blindness; we could all then go our own self-righteous ways in peace.

Yet let us look at this attitude that the prevalence of behavior excuses that behavior, and choose an example as far removed as possible from politics. For centuries both theology and philosophy held up certain ethical standards in regard to our sexual behavior. The Seventh Commandment says thou shalt not commit adultery; the Tenth says thou shalt not even covet thy neighbor's wife. Now for all these centuries nobody ever pretended that people, weak creatures that they are, always lived by those commandments. Nonetheless, the standards were there for good men to repair to. Then along came Kinsey and his followers who surveyed us in detail and showed in detail how far our actual behavior differed from the moral adjurations. From this came the view that since "everybody's" private actions transgressed the professed morality, then there was no reason to uphold the morality.

This attitude is widespread. In a carefully controlled study of college students' attitudes toward cheating, conducted by Charles R. Tittle and Alan R. Rowe at Florida Atlantic University, it was found that the threat of sanctions (disciplinary action) did have some effect on reducing cheating on examinations but that moral appeals had none whatever. In fact, after morality was mentioned to the students as a reason for not cribbing—but after the threat of sanctions was removed—cheating *increased* in each of the student groups studied. There was no discernible sense of guilt on the part of those who cheated nor, apparently, any peer-group disapproval. Tittle and Rowe concluded that "the moral appeal was simply irrelevant."

These are only two of many examples. The new behavioral scientists tell us not what we ought to do, as the moral philosophers did, but what "everybody" is actually doing. The catchphrase is "do your own thing," which means in effect to reject the very concept of behavioral value judgments. Of course the older moralists, whether theologians or philosophers, recognized the inability of fallible human beings to live up to ideal standards, but the new morality says that because people do not live up to them, the



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standards have no value. So if Mr. Agnew and those involved in Watergate succumbed to the idea that the prevalence of kickbacks or dirty tricks somehow excused their own behavior—and mournfully asked, why pick on us?—we ought to at least concede that they are not alone.

When we turn to that other rationalization for the White House plumbers and the like—the justification of means by the ends sought—we plunge deeper into a metaphysical thicket. For we must recognize that ends do justify means; in fact, if the ends sought do not justify the means, what does? We even have to recognize that a worthy end may at least excuse unworthy acts, as when, to protect his family, a man kills an intruder. The question needs to be restated: Does a worthy end justify *any* means? Can an action, no matter what, be justified by saying it was done for a worthy aim?

The answer of the Messrs. Mitchell, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and company was, for the most part, "yes," although there surely must have been someplace where they too would have drawn the line. First of all, they identified the good of the country with the reelection of Richard Nixon, given what they saw as the choice between that and the ideas seemingly represented by George McGovern; this was, incidentally, a judgment shared by the electorate. But they were motivated by more than just winning the election, which Mr. Nixon would have done anyway. In fact, much of what they did antedated the 1972 campaign or was unrelated to it, as for instance the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. When the Nixon administration came to office, the country had been through a decade of disorder, turmoil and violence. Two political assassinations had followed that of President Kennedy; there had been some three thousand bombings, large and small, some fifty thousand bombing threats sufficient to cause the evacuation of buildings. Government documents had been stolen, and security leaks were epidemic. From the bastion of the White House the country seemed to have a wild and frightful hue. To take arms against all this was, they thought, to do a service for their country.

Thinking so, they turned to the most extraordinary means.



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They stooped to common burglary. They spied by wiretapping and other methods, not only on their enemies but even on each other, creating in the process what amounted to a private secret police. They forged documents for their own purposes. The catalogue is almost endless. They not only skirted the law, they flouted it, and then some of them compounded the felonies by perjury in an effort to cover up. All, of course, in the name of what they believed to be a good cause.

It has been a sorry spectacle. But not the least disturbing thing about it is the gnawing thought that the attitude that it represents may be a reflection of the current public morality. In any event there is an unhappy resemblance between that attitude of the Watergate conspirators and the attitude of many among us toward the relationship of means to ends.

We see it on one level when disgruntled truck drivers block the public thoroughfares, and resort to violence against their noncooperating fellows, to gain what is to them a worthy objective, a change in the fuel rationing rules. We see it on another level when those presumably more sophisticated, and to whom the community might be expected to look for guidance, find their own worthy causes and then turn to the most extraordinary means for winning them. Ending the Vietnam War was certainly such a worthy aim; many would also put the ending of the draft in that category. Being considered worthy, these aims justified in the minds of many academicians, journalistic commentators and other intellectuals such means as breaking and entering draft offices to burn draft cards, riots and disorder in the streets and, at times, real physical violence to gain their ends. Not long ago a mathematics research center at the University of Wisconsin was blown up and a faculty member killed in protest against the practice of doing military research in universities. Subsequently many reputable people joined in a defense committee for the accused, and their argument was not that the police had arrested the wrong culprits but that the culprits, whoever they are, should be acquitted of dynamiting and manslaughter because they acted sincerely in a good cause. Although no one denies that the Pentagon papers were stolen, the act has been widely condoned on the grounds of a "higher patriot-



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ism." In many quarters lawlessness in pursuit of virtue has become eminently respectable.

The sum of it is that in the current morality one man's crime is another man's worthy cause. Crime we have always had with us, including malfeasance of office; amoral behavior is a human constant. The present peculiarity is in the rationalization for it. Somewhere along the line there has been an erosion of our sense of right and wrong; that is, we have lost our belief that certain actions are wrong simply because they are wrong, whether or not they violate civil statutes. The preachment has been that morality is relative, that ethics depend upon the situation. It is not wrong to steal, to commit adultery, to bear false witness, in and of themselves—it all depends. If bearing false witness results in convicting a man who is in fact guilty, then is not justice done in the end? If crime is done from sincere motives or with good provocation, should we not absolve it? It is not that we do not live up to professed moral values; the latter-day concept is that there *are* no fixed, permanent moral values for anyone to profess.

Were I a theologian I would say that we have lost our sense of sin, that we no longer believe in the existence of evil. If some men pour gasoline on a woman passing by, we must not judge the act evil however much we deplore it. We must consider what life circumstances led to this behavior and the worthiness of the social protest their act proclaims.

Perhaps here I should repeat: In all of this there is no condoning those involved in what has come to be known as Watergate. In the name of serving their country, they have done their country a great injury. But I find it more than an odd coincidence that the Watergate scandal and the Agnew scandal should come upon us at the same time. I have the fearful thought that the morality of these men reflects, as in a magnified mirror, blemishes on the public morality. When we have abroad the idea that the prevalence of behavior excuses behavior, and that worthy aims justify any means, why should we be totally surprised when a high official takes a few customary kickbacks or other high officials think preserving the public tranquility justifies burglary, forgery, spying and perjury?



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In a recent issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (Winter 1973/74) Howard Stein spoke of our "silent complicity" in Watergate, using Freudian psychology to suggest that much of what was done responded to a deep public desire. Complicity may be too strong a word, for it implies the active accomplice; like Edmund Burke, I know no way to indict a whole people. But in the sense that public attitudes form the climate for the conduct of public office his comment is perceptive. To the old adage that people get the kind of government they deserve, it could be added that they also get the kind of public morality they ask for.

To state the matter in political rather than moral terms, what has been diminished is our traditional belief in due process as a political imperative. Our Constitution, and most especially our Bill of Rights, deals not with what is to be done but how it is to be done; it rests upon the principle that the means of achieving something must be as proper as the aim sought. The needs of society demand that criminals be brought to court, that domestic tranquility be assured, that the people's grievances be corrected. But the police are restrained in the means of apprehending criminals, the government is restrained in its means of achieving tranquility, and even the people are restrained in their manner of expressing grievances; the Constitution sets forth due procedure for achieving each of these aims. When that due procedure is flouted, whether by individual citizens or by their chosen officials, then it is the substance and not merely the forms of democracy that are assailed. It is in this way that the public morality touches the public polity. When this is lost sight of by either the public generally or its public servants, then the political process is subverted.

There remains now the question of whether our year of scandals has in it any compensation for the year of agony. I can only answer by observing that there are cycles in the public morality, as there are in moral preachments. After every period of social disturbance there is a renewed search for those fixed standards to which good men can repair. It is interesting, and perhaps not just coincidental, that there is now going on a sort of introspective public soul-searching, or at least questioning, about such things



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as permissive child rearing and its effects on adult behavior. In the pulpit, in the press and in thoughtful journals of opinion our value system—or lack of it—is being reexamined.

However that may be, the saving grace in the current scandals, for all that it sounds like an inappropriate phrase, is that they were so flagrant. While we have had dishonest officials exposed and convicted, never one so high as a vice-president. While it is true that each separate action of the Watergate perpetrators has an antecedent example, never has so much been done by so many. Scandals have been piled upon scandals, until they are impossible to ignore. This time outrage was inevitable. And out of outrage comes redemption.

Or let us hope so. There is in these events a touch of tragedy in the true Aristotelian sense; the mighty fallen from high estate, the horror of inner flaws exposed, the fear that those faults may lie within us all, audience as well as actors. But tragedy also has its catharsis, and it is quite possible that out of all of this there may come a cleansing of the body politic. That will require, though, more than merely bringing the malfeasants to account, even if one of them turns out to be the president. We cannot simply jail the ones or impeach the other and suppose we have thereby remedied all. No doubt it will be a long time before our future servants are so careless in their offices, but if we are truly to restore our public morality, we must look to ourselves.



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*Continued from page 248*

swift strokes because in this fateful year all political outlines have become blurred. Everything is fluid, "the center [does] not hold," and he who aspires to stick to the middle of the road has to be more nimble than Jack jumping over the candlestick. Indeed, the very concept of the middle of the road becomes unrealistic when no road leads to anywhere, and any to everywhere.

Under such conditions, to establish a realistic position that has any sort of credibility, perhaps the best approach is by way of negatives. In the first place one must concede that the American realist is as badly jarred as the most fanatical party man, but not by Watergate. Startled a bit he was, not by the operation, but rather by the fabulous clumsiness with which it was carried out. Dirty politics we have had ever since the first secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton, leaked information to the British minister in Washington about the instructions given John Jay on a mission to England. But that operation was done so smoothly that the identity of the leaker remained concealed until some descendant of the diplomat made his ancestor's papers available to historians nearly two hundred years later.

The large significance of Watergate, on the other hand, began to be realized hardly fifteen minutes after the arrival of the seven burglars at the police station. Burglary is commonplace, but why Watergate? The most dim-witted cub reporter knew that no professional would crack that crib in the ordinary course of business, because it was notorious that the Democrats were desperately hard up, so that little money and less portable property easily convertible into cash would be found in their office. As for incriminating papers, what could a burglar do with them? It was as plain as the traditional pikestaff that this was a hired job, and since the cops had nailed no fewer than seven raiders in the room, it meant cash in such impressive wads that only an extremely affluent employer could have put it up. That meant somebody very high up in the Republican campaign, for to the Republican campaign committee, as the president may or may not have remarked, a million or so was no problem.

Nor was it the subsequent revelation of corruption in high



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places that knocked the realist off his perch. After all, Fall went to jail for taking bribes while a member of the cabinet, and every casual student of American history is sure that at least a dozen others of high standing in various administrations should have gone, but didn't. The cover-up is one of the oldest of dirty stories in American politics.

What really griped the realist was the discovery of how far utter contempt for the sovereignty of the people has permeated our political system. Certainly that sovereignty has been evaded and avoided many times. Long ago Al Smith remarked that in time of war, "we adjourn the Constitution," and the practice extends to other times of terrific stress, as in the collapse of the banking system in 1932. But hitherto, it had always been done with a certain finesse, or a face-saving hypocrisy, if you prefer, that took the arrogance out of it. The second Roosevelt, for instance, was a far more effective dictator than Nixon has ever been, but he was careful to go about it with a fine show of deference to public opinion. The fireside chats, in particular, although they were couched in rhetoric so masterly as to completely conceal the rhetorical, in logic boiled down to apologies. "I hate to do this, but I have to, for these reasons . . . so I am going ahead. But you see how it is." So he got away with it, and was cheered to the echo as he did so.

But this administration, especially as represented by Mr. Nixon's personally selected handymen, has chosen to follow a different line. Oh, they were suave enough in their choice of language, but witness after witness for the defense, especially when testifying before the Senate committee, has said, in effect, "We are running this show. We have told you that we have done nothing illegal. By what right, then, do you have the temerity to question our word? We know what is essential to national security and you don't. So shut up and attend to your own business without interfering with ours."

Well, Louis XIV said "I am the State," and made it stick throughout his reign and the next. But realists harbor some doubt that Richard Nixon is Louis XIV, and are dead certain that his palace guard is not. Furthermore, what eventually happened to the French monarchy is one of the prime horror stories of modern



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history. Hence realists are given some queasiness by promulgation of the doctrine that the executive is beyond all questioning, to say nothing of restraint, by the other branches of the government. Theoretically, of course, the legislature, plus the chief justice, has power to behead the executive by impeachment and removal of its chief officers. But to date the administration's reply to that is, "Try it, and see what it gets you!"

If this theory is accepted in common practice, no realist can deny that one of the important structural elements in our governmental fabric has given way. This element is the principle of checks and balances implemented in the Constitution by the separation of powers.

By the dictionary definition, checks and balances are restrictive, not destructive, and this is true of their practical application in the separation of powers. Nobody dreamed of giving any branch of the government the power to destroy any other branch, but only to check one if it showed a disposition to invade the province of either of the others. The power of impeachment and removal is quite another matter. It does empower the Senate to destroy a man's public life without touching his person by making it impossible for him ever again to hold any office of trust or profit under the government of the United States. But this is a desperate measure, to be invoked only against a man found guilty of treason, bribery, or some offense so heinous as clearly to disqualify a man for the office. It is obvious that removal by impeachment is too severe a penalty for a man whose most conspicuous fault is nothing worse than bad judgment.

But as the year wore on, and almost weekly a new scandal erupted while the fumes of its predecessor were still causing honest men to gag, the attitude of realists hardened progressively. Suspicion increased that here was not merely a recurrence of Hardings's bad judgment in appointing arrant rogues to positions of trust and honor, but a reflection of the belief of the man at the top that a popular mandate, once issued, is irrevocable, no matter how much it may be abused. This suspicion made a resort to impeachment seem far less drastic than at first it had appeared to be, until at last an extremely reluctant House of Representa-



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tives was driven to appoint a committee to determine whether impeachment is necessary or, indeed, possible under the wording of the Constitution.

This has revealed a serious defect in the Constitution not attributable entirely, if at all, to its writers. They knew that some time in the future a man elected to the presidency might turn traitor or accept bribes, so they made either crime ground for removal by impeachment, and they did not doubt that time might reveal offenses equally heinous, so they added "other high crimes and misdemeanors." But the only president hitherto impeached was charged only with invading the powers of Congress, of which he was acquitted, so we have had no occasion for a judicial interpretation of "high crimes and misdemeanors," and it is apparent that we can secure one only by the process of impeachment. The need is to secure an interpretation that will make the remedy effective without subjecting the president to attacks based on nothing more substantial than partisan rancor.

To effect that will obviously require hard work and great skill, which is a sobering thought, but a worse is behind it. If the separation of powers is giving way under modern pressures, what about the other main supports of our governmental edifice? To a man who sees things as they are, and not as they are supposed to be, and as demagogues assure us that they remain, which is to say, a man who has not sunk into romanticism, but is still a realist, it is appallingly plain that some of the other pillars are sagging and cracking.

Equality before the law, for example, is obviously in bad shape. True, it was always more of an ideal than an actuality, but if the rule is established that the president, and not the Supreme Court, may decide when and to what extent he is amenable to the law that applies to all other men, then legal equality is no longer even an ideal. Everyone who is merely rational, not to say realistic, knows that the six aims of government posited in the Preamble to the Constitution are ideals that, like mathematical "limits," may be approached indefinitely, but never attained short of the New Jerusalem. What daunts the realist is the intrusion of new forces that tend to impede even the slow progress we have made in the past



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One, and perhaps the most spectacular, although not necessarily the most dangerous of these, was never even imagined in 1787, and therefore was not taken into account by the framers of the Constitution. It is the weight of international responsibility imposed upon the United States by its relatively sudden emergence in 1945 as potentially the most powerful death-dealer among the nations of the world. That was due at first to our armament, which was for the moment supreme, although it was soon largely neutralized by Russia. A more lasting element of strength was and is our economic power, which was and is capable of exerting terrific, perhaps fatal pressure on any nation against whom it might be brought to bear.

In 1947 we temporarily allayed the general alarm by a masterstroke of statecraft, the Marshall Plan, that reversed the historical role of victors. Instead of grubbing through the wreckage of Europe for what loot might be recovered, we offered $20 billion and actually spent $12 billion helping the stricken continent to its feet. We could afford to do it because, at the time, our political stance was based on confidence, not on fear. Aware that nobody could attack us with the remotest chance of success, we could view the situation as rationally as a businessman, one of whose best customers has suffered a disastrous fire. The businessman, if he is really smart, will help the fellow rebuild, knowing that it will cost him nothing, for what he spends today he will get back next year in the increased business the customer will be able to give him.

The American merit in the Marshall Plan was not our good hearts, but our good sense, and we were able to exercise good sense because we were unafraid. The odds are ten to one that whatever a badly scared man does is not going to be sensible, and the history of the United States since the Russians exploded their first atomic bomb is dismal evidence that this is as true of a nation as of a man.

To the wave of terror that swept this country—wantonly fomented by Joe McCarthy and his cohorts, prominent among whom was Richard M. Nixon—can be traced every one of the more egregious errors in our foreign policy for eighteen years. Dulles's refusal to sign the Geneva agreement on Vietnam was the first, but Nixon's refusal to sign the Kissinger agreement in 1972 was the



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climactic one. It precipitated the calamitous Christmas raids on Hanoi, which cost us over one hundred airmen and $165 million worth of planes, but did drive us back to the conference table sheepishly to sign, after all, substantially the original agreement.

The miraculous part of this achievement was its successful presentation to the country as a famous victory, "peace with honor," although it did not bring peace, and only a high-powered microscope can discern the honor.

Obviously, the country's most desperate need is eyesight that at a single glance can tell the difference between a hawk and a handsaw—in the specific case, between a glorious victory and the damnedest licking taken by a supposed great power since France crashed in 1940. The proximate cause of this dimness of vision was the politics of fear, assiduously promulgated by some politicians of all parties, but most effectively by the party that happened to be in power.

But in this case, as in most others, the proximate was not the final cause. The Red army is big and tough, and no man in his right mind wants to tangle with it, but in the minds of our lords and masters—the effective, not the nominal ones—Communist military power is only a secondary danger. Their fear of communism is trivial by comparison with their fear of Americanism—distrust of its power to withstand, not the threats but the blandishments of the Red artists in hokum. That is the really valid explanation of the steady erosion of the Bill of Rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly to petition for the redress of grievances, or in modern vernacular, freedom to demonstrate. "Your people, sir, is a great beast!" said Hamilton, voicing the real, although not the avowed, basis of Federalist political theory. It has been repeated by every spokesman of that party since, although the modern designation is not Federalist, but elitist. It was murmured by Kennedy, spoken aloud by Lyndon Johnson, and bawled by Nixon, but it is essentially the same, except that the moderns strike out "great beast," and substitute Robert Burns's "wee, sleekit, tim'rous, cowerin' beastie." By an opposite approach, certain segments of the supposed liberals have arrived at approximately the same position, but that is another story.



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The position of the realist, however, is that this doctrine necessarily repudiates the experience of fifty years, and a realist doesn't believe in defying experience, preferring to be, not ruled, but guided by it.

Since 1917, which is nearly sixty years now, the smartest artists in hokum that the great empire of Russia could produce have been working on the ordinary American with only sporadic repressions, never involving tanks and rarely machine guns, usually nothing more lethal than tear gas, and what have they accomplished? According to J. Edgar Hoover, never one to underestimate the numbers of the wicked, at their top they mustered perhaps as many as fifty thousand card-carrying Communists, but shortly before his death he estimated that they had been reduced to not more than fifteen thousand—statistically negligible in a population of two hundred million.

As an ideology, political freedom has proved invulnerable to either communism or fascism. What, then, is the excuse for renouncing it?

Nevertheless, the realist has to admit that the Constitution has been badly battered, not by enemy artillery, but by the pounding of time and events. He perceives that some repair work is imperative to prevent collapse of the whole structure.

All realists therefore dread the next few years, knowing that any extensive renovation of the Constitution will afford cover to pretended repairmen who are really saboteurs intent on removing parts of the structure that are still perfectly sound, notably the Bill of Rights. Hence realists divide into two types: The optimists believe that the job will be done, after a fashion. The pessimists are already exploring the possibility of obtaining Swiss citizenship.



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# Homage to Joseph Wood Krutch: Tragedy and the Ecological Imperative

WILLIAM HOLTZ

*Many of our readers will recall that "If You Don't Mind My Saying So" was, from 1955 to 1970, the title of Joseph Wood Krutch's regular column for* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. *When Mr. Krutch died, Hiram Haydn wrote: "Very few of us minded his saying so, and all of us wish that he could have continued doing just that. Skeptical of the benefits of technology, a fierce fighter for conservation and for an intelligent approach to the problems of ecology, Joseph Wood Krutch has been, for many years, a lone but resonant voice, and we are proud to have given him this platform from which to speak."* WILLIAM HOLTZ, *who teaches at the University of Missouri, describes himself as an English professor with an interest in ecology. He delivered an earlier version of this essay at the 1973 Symposium in Nineteenth-Century Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia.*

The patron saint of ecologists, it has been suggested, ought to be Saint Francis, whose heretical Christian vision assimilated all of creation into a brotherhood with man. The saints of one sect are indeed apt to be heretics from another, visionaries possessed of a keen sense of the disparity between a perceived order of fact and the internally consistent dogma of their coevals. Certainly our contemporary ecologists draw their inspiration from a similar vision, although usually lacking the Christian component; and they are regarded with the appropriate suspicion by those whose dogmas are rooted in the exploitative habit of thought that has produced the various wonders of our prosperity. This is not necessarily to claim sainthood for all of those presently engaged in the assault upon these dogmas and upon our technological culture; we seem now to have reached the stage when heresy becomes respectable despite its polar conflicts with prevailing dogma. But the movement does have its pantheon, early prophets whose exemplary defections gleam from the past as solitary stars. Of equal stature with Saint Francis himself would be Thoreau, whose revisionist bent was so radical as to be meta-ecological and whose ninteenth-century influence was negligible compared to his importance today. Another candidate might be Aldo Leopold, the founder of modern wildlife management, who very early protested the orientation of wildlife science to the uses of commercial enterprise—this in a series of essays that show Thoreau's imprint both in style and in the disciplined development of a minority perspective. Perhaps the most recent I would name is



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Rachel Carson, whose quiet eloquence could mildly disturb but not move the bureaucracy she labored in.

This pantheon is by way of establishing the goodly company to which I would nominate a heretic from my own discipline, a scholar and writer whose career from youth to middle age traces a wholly exemplary progress for a professor of English. As a convert from an early, unpromising start in mathematics, he went from a provincial university in 1915 to the Columbia University graduate school for a Ph.D. For most of his years he remained in New York City, serving first as a drama critic, then as professor at Columbia; and in a series of literary studies he established himself as one of the luminaries of our discipline. His published doctoral dissertation on Restoration drama is still a standard text, as is his study of Edgar Allan Poe; and other works on the drama, the novel and literary aesthetics were completed before he was forty. Then came a pair of admirable books on Samuel Johnson and on Henry David Thoreau, and then, curiously, a volume of nature essays. And very shortly after, an early retirement from the academic world, relocation from New York City to the Arizona desert, and an autumnal career, seemingly remote from his academic one, as a philosophical naturalist, recording his thoughts about frogs, bats, mice and assorted creatures beneath his microscope. The early conversion from mathematics to literature we in the discipline of course applaud. The later defection to the natural sciences we may find suspect in the extreme.

*More Lives Than One,* Joseph Wood Krutch entitled his autobiography, taking his title from Thoreau. It is Krutch's progress through these lives that I would assess here, with more than a little of the hagiographer's interest in conversion and prophecy, and this despite his ostensible desertion of my own discipline, which often defines itself in terms of a contrast between the cultures of science and the humanities. For this desertion is part of a larger progress from faith to despair to faith renewed; and to the extent that this progress is grounded in literary study and ends in a vision that unifies the two cultures, his career not only justifies our study of literature but calls into question our sometimes facile disdain of science. Within the framework of this greater progress, I would trace the continuity of Krutch's engagement with the problem of man's place in the natural order, an engagement more apparent in his later career than in his early literary concerns. Very early, however, we can discern the accent of prophecy and the germ of his final affirmation.

## I

Where to find the source of Krutch's curious conversion? Perhaps in his youthful and lifelong fascination with the microscope; or perhaps in the fact that one of the earliest magazines he read as a youth was *Scientific American.* Absolutely premonitory, however, was his experience as reporter for the *Nation* at the celebrated Scopes Monkey Trial. From New York City, Krutch returned to his home state of Tennessee, and his liberal and rather polemical reportage from out of the darkness of his native province won him the editorial attention of his hometown newspaper, which nominated him as the prodigal son least wanted to return. His writing was of a piece with his other work of that time—of a piece, even, with his doctoral dissertation, which, he says, was on the Restoration drama because it was witty and indecent—and of a piece with the whole of what passed for liberal, informed opinion in the centers of thought and culture just after World War I. The crusade Krutch identified himself with, he says, was one against "Puritanism, Provincialism, and the Genteel Tradition," and he and his contemporaries were secure in their faith that a brave new world was at hand, just beyond the "traditions, prohibitions, and inhibitions of a happily moribund past."

Even in those years, however, a change was working in Krutch. By 1929, when he was thirty-five, the optimism of the decade was in its waning days, and in the intervening years since the Scopes trial he had begun to question the facile liberalism of



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his and the nation's twenties. He came to see, quite simply, that the modern iconoclasm to which he was committed had destroyed the system of values implicit in the body of literary and humanistic documents to which he was also committed. *The Modern Temper* (1929) was the sad and sudden flowering of this perception.

Krutch's prime achievement in *The Modern Temper* was to demonstrate with persuasive force the loss of sustaining values that had been the price of modern knowledge: the loss of religious faith and of an earth-centered cosmology; the diminished stature of man in the natural order; and the diminished range of his freedom in the face of deterministic forces—all familiar laments now. But Krutch's second and complementary achievement carried the true note of prophecy, as he defined an attitude toward knowledge and value that was existentialist in everything but name. The book was widely read and Krutch became identified rather more with the overtone of despair than with the affirmation of a self-conscious humanism. A passage from a chapter entitled "The Tragic Fallacy" captures a sense of the whole and will lead us on to Krutch's later concerns: he describes how the vanished faiths entailed a secondary loss in our literary heritage—the loss of tragedy, since Shakespeare, except in a debased and attenuated vestige. For in order for high tragedy to flourish, he argues, man must conceive of himself and the universe in a significant reciprocal relationship.

> In this view, man lives in a world which he may not dominate but which is always aware of him. Occupying the exact center of a universe which would have no meaning except for him, and being so little below the angels that, if he believes in God, he has no hesitation in imagining Him formed as he is formed and crowned with a crown like that which he or one of his fellows wears, he assumes that each of his acts reverberates through the universe. His passions are important to him because he believes them important throughout all time and all space; the very fact that he can sin (no modern can) means that this universe is watching his acts; and though he may perish, a God leans out from infinity to strike him down.

What we can now recognize in Krutch's description of this world in which high tragedy occurs is a concept that another scholar would shortly articulate at length and with great subtlety. In 1933, A. O. Lovejoy, the renowned historian of ideas, presented his lectures entitled *The Great Chain of Being*, and the book of that title that followed soon established itself as the definitive analysis of a world hypothesis persisting from Plato to modern times. What Lovejoy described was a conception of the universe as a completely full hierarchy of all possible modes of existence ranging from Infinite Goodness (or Perfection, or God) down to inert matter. Within this chain of being, each link partook of existence ultimately and only by virtue of communion with divinity, as a kind of universal sympathy suffused itself throughout all creation—through the orders of angels down to man and through the natural world down to elemental rock. And although the hierarchy was absolute, constrained by the abstract notion of grades of perfection, yet within the hierarchy was an equally constraining egalitarianism, as each link in the chain was equally essential to the integrity of the whole.

As Lovejoy demonstrated, this was an extremely protean concept, balanced on the paradox of ultimate power constrained by absolute necessity, and susceptible of antithetical inferences. But nothing is clearer than its force as a conservative and stabilizing model for thought right up until the nineteenth century; and when it is brought into conjunction with Krutch's remarks on tragedy, the habit of thought that Krutch terms the "tragic fallacy" can be seen as nothing less than an ethical imperative implicit in a conservative and perhaps mythic interpretation of the model. Truly, if all creation is linked in a perfect order, any individual disruption of this order will reverberate throughout the universe; and for man to conceive of himself as embraced in a divine system is at once to perceive a scale by which to measure his own nature and a cosmic order that justifies his chastisement when through error or pride he aspires beyond his place, however uniquely



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privileged he is within it. Hamlet, groping through a world befouled with crime, thinks instinctively in these terms:

> This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me.

And the storm that rages in *King Lear* is not only a figure of Lear's disordered intellect but also a measure of his stature, the immensity of his passion, as a universe, disordered by his willful crime, moves to purge the offending member and to re-establish a sound and wholesome order. Krutch's lifelong concern was to restore an ethical vision as richly humanistic as that of Shakespearean tragedy yet as faithful to modern canons of truth as the Chain of Being had been to Shakespeare's audience.

In Krutch's autobiography, there is a strong sense of crisis, insight and redirection at two points in his career; the result in both instances was a book that seemed to write itself, rapidly, out of a fullness of conviction and intensity of feeling. The first was *The Modern Temper;* and to the extent that it entailed a deliberate embracing of human values sanctioned by art, history and tradition, it may better be termed a reversion than a conversion. Apparently it saved him from the later Marxist conversion of his contemporaries, as he became in both literary and social criticism a spokesman for a conservative humanism. *Experience and Art* (1932) developed an aesthetic consonant with the cosmic pessimism of *The Modern Temper;* in it, he argued for the value of the arts in maintaining an imaginative environment hospitable to human nature, a kind of sanctuary within the inhospitable world revealed by the sciences. *Was Europe a Success?* (1934) developed a roughly analogous argument for Western culture vis-à-vis the Marxist vision of the future. But throughout these middle years of his career he continued his youthful hobby of amateur microscopic investigations; he bought a rural home in Connecticut, commuting to New York; and in 1948, shortly after completing his study of Thoreau, there came a second book that, like *The Modern Temper,* seemed to write itself as though flowing naturally from a hidden spring. It was a series of "nature" essays, based on his observations in his garden and through his microscope; and to just the extent that *The Modern Temper* crystalized his early despair, so did *The Twelve Seasons* contain the essence of the qualified optimism of the closing decades of his career—"a kind of pantheism," as he later put it, "which was gradually coming to be an essential part of the faith . . . which would form the basis of an escape from the pessimism of *The Modern Temper.*"

From pessimism to pantheism in twenty years. *The Twelve Seasons* celebrates the arrival; but it is a pantheism essentially empirical rather than mystical or transcendental, a perception not of nature as mirror of the human spirit but of the human spirit as one of the wonders of nature. The keynote is sounded in the initial essay, in which he is concerned with spring, the historic rituals of rebirth and the absurd technical problems of placing Easter on the calendar each year. Far better, he suggests, to mark the day by the first sound of the spring peepers, the small frogs who voice their new life only when "the temperature has been above freezing often enough and long enough to bring them to life."

> Surely one day a year might be set aside on which to celebrate our ancient loyalties and to remember our ancient origins. And I know of none more suitable for that purpose than the Day of the Peepers. "Spring is come!" I say when I hear them, and, "The most ancient of



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Christs has risen!" But I also add something which, for me at least, is even more important. "Don't forget," I whisper to the peepers, "we are all in this together."

Implicit in this passage is Krutch's whole postretirement career as natural historian and scientific humanist, an attempt to locate man in the natural order without sacrificing the traditional norms of his humanity. And although it is easy and tempting to identify Thoreau as the tutelary spirit in this conversion, we must consider also his involvement with Samuel Johnson. For Krutch's book on Johnson forms a natural sequence with the earlier *Modern Temper,* the subsequent study of Thoreau, and the later works of philosophical natural history. The question here is not so much Krutch's status as scholar in regard to these writers as it is the affinities that drew him to them. The relations are complex, but it can be said most simply that Johnson and Thoreau appear as exemplary figures in Krutch's own pantheon—triumphant figures, that is, in whose careers he could discern versions of the dilemma vexing himself.

## II

In his autobiography, Krutch specifically recalls discovering an identity of mood between his *Modern Temper* and the somber note of Johnson's work, particularly his *Rasselas.* The study of Johnson still stands as one of the best general introductions, which is to say that Krutch's work is scholarship rather than self-display, but the terms of his analysis and tonality of the whole mark his special interest. The work turns on the contrast of Johnson's pessimism with his zest for life, and Johnson emerges implicitly as a transitional figure between an age confident of a supernatural order behind the empirical one and the modern age, confident of nothing save the empirical order. Johnson's pessimism was constitutional, even pathological, and was rationalized in an orthodox Christianity and in a body of conservative prejudices; his zest for life was equally an endowment, similarly distorted in his compulsive conviviality, and apparently rationalized in a thoroughgoing empiricism that made experience both the source and the test of knowledge. The central conflict lay in the problem of Christian faith, which Johnson maintained with apparent temperamental difficulty, and on the basis of whatever evidence he could find.

Johnson's *Rasselas* is the most useful text at this point, in which Krutch finds embodied what he calls Johnson's "tragic sense of life." This moral tale, which tells of the discontented prince who flees his paradisiacal Happy Valley in order to know the miseries of mankind, stands as a paradigm of the relation between knowledge and experience; and it points to the very heart of Krutch's and Johnson's problem. Rasselas, watching the goats graze nearby, articulates his malaise:

> Rasselas, who knew not that any one was near him, having for some time fixed his eyes upon the goats that were brousing among the rocks, began to compare their condition with his own. "What," said he, "makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation? Every beast that strays beside me has the same corporal necessities with myself; he is hungry and crops the grass, he is thirsty and drinks the stream, his thirst and hunger are appeased, he is satisfied and sleeps; he rises again and is hungry, he is again fed and is at rest. I am hungry and thirsty like him, but when thirst and hunger cease I am not at rest; I am, like him, pained with want, but am not, like him, satisfied with fulness. The intermediate hours are tedious and gloomy; I long again to be hungry that I may again quicken my attention. The birds peck the berries or the corn, and fly away to the groves where they sit in seeming happiness on the branches, and waste their lives in tuning one unvaried series of sounds. I likewise can call the lutanist and the singer, but the sounds that pleased me yesterday weary me today, and will grow yet more wearisome tomorrow. I can discover within me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted. Man has surely some latent sense for which this place affords no gratification, or he has some desires distinct from sense which must be satisfied before he can be happy."
>
> After this he lifted up his head, and seeing the moon rising, walked towards the palace. As



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he passed through the fields, and saw the animals around him, "Ye," said he, "are happy, and need not envy me that walk thus among you, burthened with myself; nor do I, ye gentle beings, envy your felicity; for it is not the felicity of man. I have many distresses from which ye are free; I fear pain when I do not feel it; I sometimes shrink at evils recollected, and sometimes start at evils anticipated: surely the equity of providence has ballanced peculiar sufferings with peculiar enjoyments."

The question, as Krutch puts it, is, "What activity is appropriate to man? In doing what does he fulfill his function and thus satisfy himself?" And, he continues, although "the passage . . . seems at least to hint the possibility that the existence of a need must imply the existence somewhere of an answer to it," a later passage thematically related suggests that this discontent is radical, that Rasselas's hope is forever doomed. Late in the narrative, Rasselas and his philosopher-guide contemplate the pyramids of Egypt:

". . . for the pyramids no reason has ever been given adequate to the cost and labour of the work. The narrowness of the chambers proves that it could afford no retreat from enemies, and treasures might have been reposited at far less expence with equal security. It seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly upon life, and must be always appeased by some employment. Those who have already all that they can enjoy, must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use, till use is supplied, must begin to build for vanity, and extend his plan to the utmost power of human performance, that he may not be soon reduced to form another wish.

"I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king, whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life, by seeing thousands labouring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art, that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the pyramids, and confess thy folly!"

Here we can perceive Johnson's vision of man's middle state, and it is curiously yet symptomatically truncated. For although other writers of the eighteenth century were fond of contemplating man's medial position in the Great Chain, wiser than the brutes but below the angels, touched both by corruption and divinity, Johnson is constrained in this narrative to the *merely* middle state. Rasselas begins by defining himself in contrast with animal creation, and in his quest he must come to terms with these monumental trivialities, emblems of the futility of that same human aspiration, that "hunger of the imagination," which sets him apart from the beasts. Indeed, he has not even the consolation of a truly middle state: bracketed on one side by his brute neighbors, he has literally no evidence for anything more. The only character in the narrative to approach fulfillment is the mad astronomer, who has come to believe that his volition controls the weather—an absurd reduction of the sympathetic vibrations of the universe perceived by Lear or Hamlet, and specifically diagnosed by Johnson as the result of the "dangerous prevalence of the imagination." There are indications elsewhere that Johnson considered the "hunger of the imagination" to be strong evidence of the truth of Christianity; but the story of Rasselas has no religious component, and the prince's question hangs over this purely sublunary narrative unanswered, save by his sister's ironic insight that "none are happy but by the anticipation of change."

What I intend to emphasize here is at once Johnson's characteristic tendencies of thought and the attractiveness of these for the author of *The Modern Temper*. For Johnson's hard-won religious faith, and the whole body of traditional values adhering to it, were what had fallen out of Krutch's world, while at the same time Johnson's enormous experiential vitality, his immersion in the world of sense and common sense, planted him squarely in



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the mainstream of empirical thought that runs from Bacon to our own day.

Krutch's study is consistent with more recent interpretations of Johnson that have stressed his consistent skepticism and empiricism in almost all matters but religious ones, and it now seems clear that the many inconsistencies of his career stem from a powerful conflict between convictions sanctioned by both religion and tradition and convictions forced upon him by his temperamental receptivity to immediate experience. Historically Johnson looms as a great conservative and the last interpreter of a neoclassical tradition with its roots in Aristotle and Horace. But in the actual play of mind revealed in his engagement with the literary texts, the ultimate test is not conformity to rule but the experience of the reader, and his criticism is as notable in detail for its radical independence as it is in its main outlines for its traditional values. His personal life reveals the capacity for doubt, for rigorous scrutiny of ideas, that was well known to his contemporaries. Hogarth perceived its boundaries quite clearly: "That man," he said, "is not contented with believing the Bible, but he fairly resolves, I think, to believe nothing *but* the Bible." Mrs. Thrale, who reports the saying, adds: "Mr. Johnson's incredulity amounted almost to a disease." And Johnson perceived these boundaries himself. His belief in Christianity depended heavily on accepting the traditional Christian evidences as evidence, rather than resting easily on faith, and of the evidence for life after death, he could say, in terror and despite his conviction—"I like to have more."

It is entirely characteristic, in this perspective, that while the bulk of Johnson's writing expresses a sober morality grounded in religion, his prose style is penetrated with figures drawn from the new science and his dictionary is heavily freighted with words from the same source. It is likewise characteristic that Johnson's direct and immediate engagement with the miseries of man's middle state should make him the eighteenth century's severest critic of the concept of the Great Chain of Being, which for many of his contemporaries served to locate that middle state and to rationalize its miseries in terms of the perfection of the whole. For in a powerful review of a work by a dilettante named Soame Jenyns, Johnson's logic, fueled by his passion, served to demolish the metaphysical system that might have afforded a less strenuously empirical mind a unifying structure for his essentially conservative commitments, and perhaps an ameliorating optimism to balance the radical discontent that emerges in *Rasselas*. Jenyns had written *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, arguing in what had become a conventional way that man's perception of evil derives from his limited perspective in his middle state—that, in Pope's phrase, partial evil is universal good. Johnson disliked metaphysics generally, but Jenyns's version outraged him by its imaginative justification of specifically human miseries in the pleasure and utility of some hypothetically higher order of beings, an order whose character Jenyns unconsciously infers from the basest aspects of human nature. In Jenyns's words:

> Man is one link of that vast chain. . . . If we look downwards, we see innumerable species of inferior Beings, whose happiness and lives are dependent on his will; we see him cloathed by their spoils, and fed by their miseries and destruction, inslaving some, tormenting others, and murdering millions for his luxury or diversion; is it not therefore analogous and highly probable, that the happiness and life of Man should be equally dependent on the wills of his superiors?

We are here somewhere between a world penetrated by anthropomorphic powers and one ruled by blind determinism—between the imaginations of Shakespeare and Hardy, we might say. Johnson's critique is essentially logical (that a superior order would necessarily be above such purely human needs), but the real devastation of Jenyns's conception is accomplished in the controlled passion of Johnson's satire:

> He might have shown, that these "hunters, whose game is man," have many sports analo-



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gous to our own. As we drown whelps and kittens, they amuse themselves, now and then, with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim, or the walls of Prague, as we encircle a cockpit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. . . . Many a merry bout have these frolick beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble down again, and all this he knows not why. . . . a set of beings, unseen and unheard, are hovering about us, trying experiments upon our sensibility, putting us in agonies, to see our limbs quiver; torturing us to madness, that they may laugh at our vagaries; sometimes obstructing the bile, that they may see how a man looks, when he is yellow; sometimes breaking a traveller's bones, to try how he will get home; sometimes wasting a man to a skeleton, and sometimes killing him fat, for the greater elegance of his hide.

This was the Johnson whose native pessimism, even despair, was so belied by his human sympathies that he kept in his household as family a collection of unfortunates and misfits whose only claim on him was their necessity. This was likewise the Johnson whose compassion moved him to befriend ailing prostitutes from the street and to press pennies into the hands of sleeping beggar-children. And whose attachment to this middle state was so strong as to provoke a final, pitiful experiment on his deathbed, as, mistaking symptom for cause, he slashed his swollen legs with scissors to see if draining the fluid would prolong his life. "I want length of life," he cried to the physician attending him, "and you fear giving me pain, which I care not for."

Again, the point here is not so much to interpret Johnson as to suggest that there are deep parallels between Johnson Agonistes and Krutch Agonistes. Central must have been Johnson's heroic achievement in maintaining at once a living belief in the traditional norms of humanity and a thoroughly modern sense of evidence. The erosion of the first of these by the second had been Krutch's theme in *The Modern Temper,* and that erosion is certainly the twentieth-century result of the Baconian current that swirled around Johnson's faiths. No doubt Johnson's own eager embrace of experience for the sake of knowledge is the easiest aspect of his temper for us to understand, and although Johnson has no mention in the sweep of history Krutch covers in that early book, it is easy to see the attraction he would later have as a negative instance of a thesis Krutch had so reluctantly propounded—a man of immense skepticism, immense humanity, and immense commitment to sustaining values. And Krutch himself would soon find that the best cure for a spirit sick with the knowledge borne of experience was—more knowledge and more experience.

## III

Krutch's interpretation of Thoreau delineates a similar exemplary struggle. For the base line of our observations, we can take a passage from *Walden* that should by now have a familiar ring:

As I came home through the woods with my string of fish, trailing my pole, it being now quite dark, I caught a glimpse of a woodchuck stealing across my path, and felt a strange thrill of savage delight, and I was strongly tempted to seize and devour him raw; not that I was hungry then, except for that wildness which he represented. Once or twice, however, while I lived at the pond, I found myself ranging the woods, like a half-starved hound, with a strange abandonment, seeking some kind of venison which I might devour, and no morsel could have been too savage for me. The wildest scenes had become unaccountably familiar. I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both. I love the wild not less than the good.

From here we can look both ways, toward Rasselas contemplating the beasts in his valley and toward Krutch communing with his spring frogs in Connecticut. Clearly, for Johnson, man and the rest of creation were discontinuous, whereas Thoreau perceived a continuity radiating in two directions from himself—down through



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the woodchuck realm, upward through the realm of spirit. And whereas the whole point of Rasselas's quest seems to be that man's nature is not to be fulfilled in this world, Thoreau's whole argument in *Walden* is that it can be, if only the resources of the Chain in both directions are tapped. Krutch's inferences are not so simple as either of these, but they are strongly marked by his experience with Thoreau, who, like Johnson, attracted Krutch by the creative tension between the doctrine he needed to live by and the raw experience that rendered this doctrine problematical. But in the case of Thoreau, the struggle is nothing so simple as that between religious orthodoxy and native skepticism, for the whole is suffused with the nineteenth-century romantic reinterpretation of the world, and further qualified by the context of the transcendentalism that was the New England version of this change. Transcendentalism is not identical with pantheism, and it is possible to embrace either without the other, but it is Thoreau's empirical working out of his own prophetic pantheism in a dialectic with the implicit dogma of Emerson's transcendentalism that forms our analogue with Samuel Johnson here.

What Krutch discerns in Thoreau, particularly in the notebooks from which *Walden* was so painstakingly quarried, is another unwritten *Walden,* a darker *Walden,* implicit in those observations that cluster about a pole distant from the Emersonian optimism. It is a commonplace to say that Thoreau put Emerson's ideas to the test of experience; and what Krutch perceives is a perceptible shift from an early Emersonian doctrine, in which the natural world is read as an allegory of human values, toward a concern for natural fact as corrective or instructive to human egoism. Krutch invokes a metaphor reminiscent of the lost certainties of *The Modern Temper,* describing Thoreau's oscillation between "Ptolemaic" and "Copernican" conceptions of man's place in nature; and he perceives Thoreau moving toward a pantheism much less humanistic than that implied in Emerson's assertion that "the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass." Thoreau was capable of embracing this doctrine, but only intermittently, and only in a dialectic with a less anthropocentric version of the relationship between nature and mind. Within the same year (1852) he could write not only that "the constant inquiry which nature puts is: Are you virtuous?" and that "the perception of beauty is a moral test," but also that

> I do not value any view of the universe into which man and the institutions of man enter very largely or absorb much attention. Man is but the place where I stand, and the prospect hence is infinite. . . . The universe is larger than enough for man's abode. Some rarely go outdoors, most are always at home at night, very few indeed have stayed out all night once in their lives, fewer still have gone behind the world of humanity, seen its institutions like toadstools by the wayside.

Surely this is the Copernican pole of his thought, and at times he seems to orbit into an icy indifference that borders on the inhuman. "From the very beginning," Krutch writes, "he had tended in moments of stress, to seek consolation by identifying himself with the nature which is indifferent to us rather than with a nature which is part of us." At age twenty-four, he wrote concerning the death of his brother: "What right have I to grieve, who have not ceased to wonder? . . . Soon the ice will melt, and the blackbirds sing along the river which he frequented, as pleasantly as ever. The same everlasting serenity will appear on the face of God, and we will not be sorrowful if he is not." And some years later he could reply to one who queried him about happiness:

> Why! the stones are happy, Concord River is happy, and I am happy too. When I took up a fragment of walnut-shell this morning, I saw by its very grain and composition, its form and color, etc. that it was made for happiness. . . . Do you think that Concord River would have continued to flow these millions of years by Clamshell Hill and round Hunt's Island, if it had not been happy—if it had been miserable



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in its channel, tired of existence, and cursing its maker and the hour it sprang?

As Krutch puts it, "to ask that man be happy like the Concord River is to approach a sort of pantheism which seems on the point of breaking the last link with humanity."

Krutch connects this drift toward cosmic detachment with a tendency, after 1855, toward a more and more laborious cataloguing of natural phenomena, always to the end of "an emotional as well as an intellectual participation in natural processes," but apparently yielding this union less readily as his knowledge increased, and then on terms that render man's position in the natural order, however spiritualized, extremely problematical. What insights must come to one on his belly in the mud, watching a turtle hatch from its egg? "If Iliads are not composed in our day, snapping turtles are hatched and arrived at maturity." Krutch saw Thoreau as moving toward what might be called, by contrast with Emerson, *earned* insight: "away from the transcendental assumption that the meaning of nature can be reached by intuition and toward what is the fundamental scientific assumption—namely, that only through observation may one ultimately reach not merely dead facts but also those which understanding can make live." This is not to make Thoreau into a scientist, for he was himself largely antipathetic to the natural science of his day, which was in the main devoted to anatomy and taxonomy. He for a time supplied specimens for the zoologists at Harvard, and noted, after killing a turtle for the sake of science, that he had a "murderer's experience in a degree." The most that can be said is that Thoreau's instincts for observation were those of a scientist, while the sciences he would have loved—ethology, for instance, and the modern, comprehensive vision of ecology—had not yet emerged. Nor had the kind of imaginative and philosophical apprehension of natural history that descends to Krutch through such writers as Burroughs, Muir and Julian Huxley.

Thoreau stands as isolated in his way as was Johnson: divided from doctrinaire transcendentalism by his empirical perception of the marginal human realm within the immensity of the natural, and divided from the certainty of science by its aridity of spirit. His immersion in the natural is the complement of Johnson's in the human: he loved nature "*because* she is not man but a retreat from him." "He is constraint, she is freedom to me. . . ." And the aim of this freedom is nothing more or less than knowledge: "How sweet is the perception of a new natural fact! Suggesting what worlds remain to be unveiled."

Clearly, however, transcendentalist dogma was not adequate to assimilate the facts, and at his almost pathologically remote moments Thoreau seems on the brink of what we would call alienation; certainly he implies an awareness and an acceptance of a view of man's marginal place in the universe strikingly similar to that in *The Modern Temper*. Yet a faith remained, perhaps receiving subterranean nourishment from Concord Christianity, that the universe sanctioned an ethical stance. As Krutch concludes, "Thoreau seems never to have perceived quite clearly the difference between saying that nature confirms man's moral notions and saying, as he himself seems to become more and more inclined to say by implication, that what nature teaches *is* morality even when it conflicts with what either the individual or society has assumed." The equanimity with which Thoreau accepted his own early death has been often admired, as has his response to the query as to whether he had made his peace with his maker: "I was not aware we had ever quarreled." Presumably that decorum was grounded in a faith in the natural order that Krutch found as attractive as Johnson's warmer commitment to the human order. And it can be said that Johnson's temperamental commitment to the human condition cut him off from an easy relationship with a larger order; whereas Thoreau's single-minded commitment to a larger order tended to cut him off from normal human concourse. The failures of each are as instructive as their characteristic triumphs.



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## IV

Thoreau, however, did not have to assimilate into even his most Copernican vision the bad news that has vitiated humanistic thought since his time—Darwin, Marx, Freud, Pavlov. All of whom, in concert, have effectively robbed modern man of his faith in his privileged place in the order of creation. The spiritual realm evaporates, the Chain of Being is terminated at man and drained of its cosmic import. Thoreau is leveled with his woodchuck, which in turn is reduced to a stimulus-response mechanism, and the ground is laid for the despair that Krutch articulated in *The Modern Temper*. This is the zero point that he begins to move from with his essay on the spring peepers. "We are all in this together." A long way from Rasselas's assumptions about the unique position of man, or even Thoreau's.

Out of this moment of insight came Krutch's postprofessional career and his systematic reassembly of a world man can live in. In the most general sense, this meant to give up the comprehensive hypotheses of the various determinisms on which *The Modern Temper* had been based, and this for the best of reasons: because they were, for all their range of certitude, inadequate to important areas of experience and destructive of unique human potential. His argument in these years progressed along two fronts: the one best represented by two volumes of social criticism (*The Measure of Man*, 1953, and *Human Nature and the Human Condition*, 1959), the other by his several volumes of nature essays (especially *The Desert Year*, 1952, and *The Great Chain of Life*, 1956). The main thrust of the first pair was to define a uniquely privileged *human* nature and to rescue it from the social dogmas implicit in mechanistic biology, statistical sociology, and stimulus-response psychology—dogmas that might be subsumed in the popular fallacy that "man is an animal and an animal is a machine." His achievement is to meet these adversaries on their own grounds, to detect the unwarranted extensions of their claims, and to create in the margins between their legitimate competencies a basis for what he calls Minimal Man: the few things needed to justify in the natural order the traditional norms of human value.

As complement to these wide-ranging essays are his nature books, continuations of the impulse tapped in *The Twelve Seasons*, and really the basis on which his social criticism is built. The best of these is *The Great Chain of Life*, which carries forward the premise arrived at in the earlier book, that "we are a part of Nature, nevertheless, no matter what she may be. . . . Whatever we discover about her we are discovering also about ourselves." Few in these days could disagree, but this premise rests in turn upon another that separates Krutch from his opponents: that man has mistakenly conceived Nature upon the model of a machine, thus alienating himself from the principle of life. *The Great Chain of Life* seeks to rectify this error, which has collapsed man and his values into mere conditioned behavior and has posited a blind evolutionary mechanism as the sole principle connecting man and the rest of creation. Krutch reexamines the whole question, working his way up the phylogenetic scale with his microscope, his field observations, and his keenly felt rapport with the natural order. What emerges most obviously is a purely biological basis for a solid core of human values; what emerges also, however, is a criticism of mechanist and behaviorist theories of evolution and biology for their failures to be empirical enough—that is, for loving the security of a hypothesis (or a dogma) too well to assess adequately the whole body of human experience. For Krutch does not at all object to assimilating man wholly to the phylogenetic scale, provided that one does not fall prey to "mechanomorphism," that is, the fallacy of interpreting living entities upon the reductive model of a machine. For merely to be alive is to participate in a complex and wonderful enterprise, one much richer than the mere elaboration of survival mechanisms can explain; and life contemplated wholly and openly reveals evidence not only for



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the deepest-laid of traditional values but for an optimistic view of man's place in nature, a special glory and a special future attaching to that nature that is uniquely human. Neither so cosmically pessimistic as Johnson nor so cosmically optimistic as Thoreau, yet as deeply attached to the human order as Johnson and to the natural order as Thoreau, Krutch offers in his own career the example of the restorative power of our literary heritage. For by this time, he is able to see our need for literature, and for the arts generally, in a more positive light than in the thoroughly existentialist *Experience and Art* of 1932. Now he sees it not merely as a symbolic alternative world to the natural order, but as a unique product of that order as man is a unique product, a refined adaptive instrument for exploring the potential of that aspect of nature that is human. Cut off from that realm of experience, he warns, and nurturing ourselves solely on the seductive certainties of an arid naturalism, we run the risk of betraying ourselves and our destiny.

I have mentioned that I find Krutch a prophetic figure, especially in *The Modern Temper*. At the time of his death in 1970, he had lived just to the verge of but not into the contemporary age of ecological awareness. Certainly he prefigured this awareness; no doubt he helped in some measure to bring it about. What is most interesting, however, is to contemplate the implicit prophecy of his later study when set against his particular concern for the death of tragedy in the modern world. Krutch had succeeded in finding a basis for human value in the natural order, but he had not wholly connected his philosophic and social concerns with his earlier literary ones. It takes only a little reflection, however, to bring together his early essay on the intimate universe in which tragedy occurs with his late study of man's deep affinities with the scale of life below him, and to bring into alignment with these hierarchies not only the classical Great Chain of Being—which mediates among them all—but also the Darwinian evolutionary succession and the sensitive, mutually interdependent ecological hierarchy that we now know to be the basis of life on our small planet. It can be said that the latent paradox in the classical conception—that is, the ascending degrees of perfection as opposed to the equal importance of each degree to the whole—that this latent paradox operated in a very important way in that sea-change from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century; that gradually the concept of equality of individual members and the fulfillment of individual aspiration came to predominate over the concept of subordination within the hierarchy. Thus, socially and politically, the great egalitarian revolutions; thus also the attractiveness of the Darwinian version of the Chain, which brought the hierarchy into the temporal world of process and change and sanctioned the many varieties of aggressive individualism. But at the same time as this egalitarian revolution was leveling differences within the human order, the human order itself was elevated to an unprecedented degree of power over the rest of nature. Man's technological mastery over his environment does not approach the mad astronomer's dream of controlling the weather, but the self-regarding impulse is the same, and the difference is merely that we have devised techniques to realize only slightly less grandiose dreams. The result has been a purely human pattern of material aggrandizement that has swiftly and irretrievably debased the complexity, variety and beauty of the living world as a whole. In an older time, with an older notion of a stable hierarchy, man could conceive of an action of his own of such magnitude as to set the very cosmos reeling and mobilizing its forces to expunge his error; in the interval since then, man has come to think of the hierarchy as a kingdom that he can rule, subject to no law save his own will and a few blind forces that circumscribe the whole. The extinction of some species, the steady attrition of others, the actual poisoning of the communal air and water, have been the more notable results of this pursuit of happiness.



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Much has been made of "the ecology," a term that implies an absolute state. In point of fact, there must always be *an* ecological order so long as there is life, whether the order is lacking the passenger pigeon or man himself. Our knowledge of thermodynamics reveals that the most probable condition is absolute disorder, the entropic state toward which all things tend, and that nothing is more improbable than the complex organization that is life itself. From a limited human point of view, one order may seem as good as another. Few of us miss the buffalo or the long-grass prairie. But the world we now inhabit is demonstrably poorer because less complexly ordered, a few stages closer to the nullity and void we rush toward with steady acceleration. At our present intermediate stage, we must recognize that the concern for "the ecology" is implicitly a value judgment in favor of a complex over a reduced order. The inferences tend to be ethical, but the basic perception would seem to be aesthetic, while the order itself, as a body of empirical data, is certified as true by our science. What we are on the verge of realizing in our own time—knowledge forced upon us by purely empirical fact, knowledge certainly unknown to Shakespeare but darkly dreamed of—is that the whole order is one life, all parts mutually interdependent, within which we, from our privileged position, can offend and offend and offend.

In such a universe—now a fact, rather than a metaphysical conception—our own modern version of tragedy becomes possible. So long as man's concerns are merely human, focused on bending the rest of nature to his whims, tragedy, as Krutch suggests, is not possible, for there is no higher order man can conceive of offending and no law governing his actions toward the order below him. But we can now perceive how possible it is to so disorder the Chain of Life through our monstrous egoism as to wreak immense havoc upon ourselves, either through spectacular disaster or slow attrition and degradation. No doubt the ethical insights of high tragedy, from Sophocles to Shakespeare, were the fruit of centuries of bitter experience with man's capacity for folly, a cumulative wisdom absorbed by the writer from the very air his culture breathed. This new tragedy I speak of now has, of course, not been written: it exists only as a hypothetical correlate of the emerging wisdom regarding our place in the natural order, and if it comes to be written, we can only speculate on its characteristics. The greater problem is whether the wisdom can be wholly born, become part of the air our culture breathes, without the discipline, the empirical evidence, of our grandest capacity for folly. If this is possible, we may in fact be wise enough to live in our world without needing exemplary tales of our highest abilities to bring disaster upon our heads. If this is not possible, and if brute experience is all we can learn from, these new tragedies, of our children's children, or of those after them, may well be of such terrors as we cannot imagine. Or there may be the ultimate tragedy of all, unwritten, because there will be no author, no audience, no humanity—merely a debased natural order whose leading citizen was not good enough to survive.



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# *Chagall and I Prepare Our Colors*

Dave Smith

This Russian peasant, a man I know
only by cryptic things she says
when night has settled in its ditch
and her belly distends so sheets jump,
makes me jumpy, keeps me from the sag
of sleep. I can't quit thinking and
I can't think straight. Drive fast,
no wrong turns, dead ends, his colors
wow, so brilliant, tank is full of gas,
his clowns have such energy, the moon,
why is it always tugging at the eyes,
she says they'll call everyone in time.

Yesterday I came upon her blooming gold
in the room where Chagall faced the sun
of late afternoon, the angles and sad
tanglings of a clown seizing her, fusion
of his art, her rapture, a sizzling silence
I could not enter, like a prayer room.
He looks, I said, in those blues and greens
like something nailed together, a figure
not quite human, but human enough to hang



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in a child's room. For Christ's sake don't
cry I said, remembering the maternal blues.

Below the window an elm limb jumped, held
a bird with a straw, then flipped him in air.
'Did you see that' she said, 'Chagall's
clowns make me feel like a bird.' I asked
if everything was ready, asked again. It is
as if we had lost the old language, new
words keep piling up between us and I break
into open rooms like a bird in a wrong place.
If I knew where you lived, Russian, I'd call
to say bring the straw in, you must come now,
alert your neighborhood of angels and clowns.
I'd say there is going to be a birth, get
a pallette: you have rights like anyone.

✪ DAVE SMITH reports that his third book of poems, *The Fisherman's Whore,* will be published this spring and that he is "slowly battling a novel into shape."



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## *REAPPRAISALS*

# Willa Cather: The Light Behind Her Books

MARGARET HOWE FREYDBERG

One October evening at dusk, during the time when I was reading all of Willa Cather's work—verse, essays, short stories, novels—I was driving along a country road in upstate New York. I had come only the day before from the seashore, where I live, to this fertile countryside, where I was born. In the darkened light the fields of new winter rye, a peculiarly vivid green, stretched flat between farms.

Fiction, an engorgement of it, and fact gradually fused, and I was presently full of the sense of Nebraska, Willa Cather's Nebraska. Next, startlingly, I seemed to be detached from both Nebraska and upstate New York and I was driving past greening fields that were unspecified, stateless, simply fields—their essence.

Now in this mysterious twilight farmland I noticed a small dark figure coming toward me along the side of the road. As I approached it I saw that it was a boy running. And as I passed him I saw for an intense moment that I knew him as thoroughly, right down into the depths of his spirit, as I would ever know a boy.

This is how it happened that in one moment, after weeks of ingesting greening fields and country boys, and much else, I thought I knew what Willa Cather's genius was, and how it worked, and why it was timeless. I saw that she had created a boy on a page, that he had grown in me, cumulatively, throughout the reading of all her work, and now here he was, come to full life, running along a country road on this October evening. I understood of course that my entire self, my heart and senses as well as my mind, had been engaged in assimilating this art. But also, I, my entire self that is, instinctively recognized that the force, the animus behind Willa Cather's greatest work, was the very exceptional quality of *her* entire self, of her heart and mind and senses; it was as though, reading *My Antonia,* for instance, something of atavistic purism and simplicity in me had met the same thing in this complete story of man and the land. I saw that her greatest work was illumined by her own moral excellence and inseparable from it, and by her reverent and passionate perception of life, down to the minutest detail—which is of course the way we live life, not from Wagnerian peak to Wagnerian peak (assuming some of us have them), but through all the moments in between. I saw that through her comprehensive perception and respect, and, through her artful expression of this, through the intricate interdevelopment and final fusion of these two beings—self and art—she had accomplished the miracle of creating a living boy.

This is the essence of Willa Cather's imperishable achievement, and it is imperishable, as vital, as contributive, as necessary today as it ever was. She was what she saw. She had an affinity for beauty because beauty lived in her, for integrity because hers was so deep. She could respond because she was alive with all that she responded to. She had "an entire correspondence with her original condition," to paraphrase Webster's definition of integrity, and it served her art well.

MARGARET HOWE FREYDBERG's novels include *The Bride* and *The Lovely April.*



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She sums it up for us in describing Sarah Orne Jewett, although she could be writing about herself:

> We like a writer much as we like individuals; for what he is, simply, underneath his accomplishments. Oftener than we realize, it is for some moral quality, some ideal which he himself cherishes . . . . It is the light behind his books and is the living quality in his sentences. It is this very personal quality of perception, a vivid and intensely personal experience of life, which makes a "style."

And, I would add, it is of course also process—the dynamics that fuse these qualities into art. Thus, source and process, the woman and her art, the two finally becoming indivisible. It seems to me that this fusion is the essence of Willa Cather's greatness, and therefore what I feel is important to say about her.

I like to know how people get to be the way they are. And I have an urgent curiosity about what the alchemy was that made such a rarity as Willa Cather. But not having known her, I have only her words, and the words of her biographers and critics, to help to enlighten me about what, aside from the fortunate circumstance of having been born that way, shaped the person that would shape the artist. There was her family of course, right-minded farming parents, natural aristocrats; grandparents, uncles and aunts of the same reliable stock; brothers and sisters she loved—all, people who were the wholesome daily bread of her childhood. And there was her environment—the move to Red Cloud, Nebraska, in her ninth year and to a pioneering culture in which stamina and the capacity to adapt were necessary for any degree of well-being, let alone for survival—perhaps the most fertile circumstance of her life, occurring as it did in her formative years. Much of her writing was to deal with variations on the theme of transplantation and adaptation and survival, of how men and women tackle these challenges, endure, and even flower in them. There were the flat, vast vigor and relentless demand of the prairie country and the sturdy and simple excellence of the Europeans—Scandinavians, Germans, Bohemians—who had emigrated here to farm it, and an ample family who lived with fortitude, with grace, and with compassionate neighborliness. It was inevitable that Willa Cather's art would come from the wonderful stuff of these early circumstances—from her ardor for land, for skies, for creatures, for simple and good living in which the heart prevailed, for friendship, for a heroism that coped with *les forces majeurs* as well as with the smaller but often harder-to-endure exigencies of day-to-day existence, and above all, for people, for the endlessly fascinating constants and contradictions of human personality.

Education shaped her, stimulated her from the beginning. It was a uniquely good education, and deep-rooted, begun while still in Virginia by her grandmother, who provided her first schooling at home. It continued in this same intensely personal and stimulating way in Red Cloud during her high school years by three teachers, loved friends, who quickened her interest in literature, in foreign languages, in Latin and Greek; and it continued in an atmosphere of unusual academic freedom at the University of Nebraska, where she began her first writing.

Years of hard work as journalist, teacher, editor for *McClure's* shaped her too, and taught her and drained her—writing had to be wedged in. And there were other powerful influences. In Pittsburgh, where she had gone for her first job, she found music, one of the most important loves of her life; and theater, and friends, friends, friends. Not the least of her arts was her capacity for friendship. And on her first trip to Europe she fell in love with France, with the Old World, and loved it forever. And somewhere along the way she met the works of Flaubert, and of Sarah Orne Jewett, two of the most potent literary influences of her life, Flaubert simply through his work, and Sarah Orne Jewett through her work, and her friendship, and then through direct advice. She feared that the direction Willa Cather was going in would deplete her creative energies, and in 1908 she wrote her, with solicitous reproof:



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If you don't keep and guard and mature your force, you will be writing things not much better than you did five years ago . . . . Your vivid, exciting companionship in the office must not be your audience, you must find your own quiet centre of life and write from that to the world that holds offices, and all society . . . . In short, you must write to the human heart . . . otherwise . . . what might be insight is only observation . . . you can write about life, but never life itself. . . .

Willa Cather knew, too, that this was what she must do, and finally, of course, she did it, all of it, although it took a long time, as lives go. Eventually she left *McClure's* and devoted herself entirely to writing. And of course, eventually too, her writing became as alive, as directed toward the human spirit, as Sarah Orne Jewett had counseled her that it should be. She could not really have done otherwise, I think, being the way she was, and because of all that was so deeply and firmly planted in her.

She wrote her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*. And she knew it had been a wrong direction, and later wrote, "[It] was my first novel, and does not deal with the kind of subject matter in which I now feel most at home. . . . It was the result of meeting some interesting people in London. . . . London is supposed to be more engaging than, let us say, Gopher Prairie; even if the writer knows Gopher Prairie very well and London only casually."

She wrote her second novel, *O Pioneers!*, and knew that this was where she belonged, back in her soul's habitat—man and nature. She knew now that "when a writer once begins to work with his own material he realizes that, no matter what his literary excursions may have been, he has been working with it from the very beginning—by living it. . . . In working with it he finds that he need have little to do with literary devices; he comes to depend more and more on something else . . . what Mr. Bergson calls the wisdom of intuition as opposed to that of the intellect."

She wrote her third novel, *The Song of the Lark*, and although this was unquestionably, because somewhat autobiographical, her "own material," she knew that its prolixity was a wrong direction, that, ". . . the fullblooded method, which told everything about everybody, was not natural to me and was not the one in which I would ever take satisfaction."

But then, at last, when she was forty-one, she came firmly to the place where she knew she belonged, to the center in herself that was a reservoir of all that her original self was, and all that she had grown to be and to know—to the writing of *My Antonia*, her first great work. Or rather, *My Antonia* poured from that reservoir in a river of beauty and power, for it does, because of its episodic nature, seem to have the flow, the movement of life itself. Her prose, although it had been tending toward lucidity and compression, had come now to suit her subject exactly, to have the richness and the depth and the evocative power of perfect simplicity, containing in one sentence, it seems, everything that should be there. I believe there has never been a more exact re-creation in artistic depth of American farm and small-town life in the 1890s; nor, since it doesn't deserve to be narrowed down to this specificity, has there probably ever been a finer novel written about man and the soil. I know I haven't read, and possibly never will again, any novel about what the land is and what it means and about the people belonging to it, that has so utterly taken me into it, or put itself into me. It was not as though I were reading it; it was as though I were experiencing it. It was not about land—it was land.

The full range of her sympathies and responses is here—to people, to creatures, to tragedies, to exuberant or quiet joys, and always to the minutiae of daily living (the color and shape and texture of what is on the breakfast table in a warm country kitchen on a blizzardy morning), to weather, to the magic of light, to sunsets. Sunsets are such a recurrent theme in her work that they seem to illumine and animate her pages with the very passage and rotation of the sun itself. One feels the vision beyond the senses and deep within the spirit, even the religiosity, the benediction, that she must have experienced in them.



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A full range of superlatively known and felt characters is here, too, although they are the secondary ones, and not, I persist in feeling, the principal character, Antonia. Can it be that there really was a woman like Antonia, in all her magnificent and natural worth? Possibly. But she confirms a suspicion begun with *O Pioneers!*'s Alexandra, another monumentally valuable woman, that, although there were women like this and Willa Cather knew them, she infused their reality with too much of her own idealism, too much of her own reverence for virtue and stamina, with the result that they emerge rather as monuments to Pioneer Woman than as believable women.

In her greatest novels and short stories there is a kind of affinity between language and subject that is lacking in the four novels that came after *My Antonia*. This was what she knew, what she was. She did best what she cared most about. But *The Lost Lady*'s Madame Bovary-like Mrs. Forrester, and *My Mortal Enemy*'s Myra Henshawe, both stereotypes, it seems to me (although Myra Henshawe less so), of worldly and romantic heroines, are not the women who are her central concern, any more than are the drawing rooms they inhabit, and so the stories of their sophisticated passions are without the vital substance of her great works, although *My Mortal Enemy* is a perfect small ripe fruit of a novel, exquisite in brevity and composition, one of the most accomplished of her novels from the point of view of craft. In these two novels, and even in *The Professor's House*, except for the superb story within a story of Tom Outland, I feel that she was not on the track of what she had basically and fervently to say, and that they were "literary excursions" in that they took her away from the center of her own being, and from the cultivation, so to speak, of that garden. This is not to say that their subjects are minor, or that she should not have explored them, or that they are not marvels of pure, quiet, unornamented prose. It is simply that they are not as much Willa Cather's "own material" as her greatest work—what she knew with her whole being, and what stirred her so wonderfully. They seem to have been given birth by her mind, but not by her whole self, as though their subjects were within the range of her interests, but not of her intuitions.

Art informs us about life. We look at a painting of a flight of starlings, and the next time we see a flight of starlings in the sky we know it as though for the first time. Then we look again with refreshed interest at the painting, and we find that flight has become visible in a way it never was before.

This is what occurs with Willa Cather's art. She puts us in the fully revealed wholeness of a moment. Comprehensively, she perceives the essence, and the scope, of an experience. She is totally alive to it, and her rendering of it, combined with our elusive memory of some such experience we have had and valued, without knowing entirely why, creates it for us as it might have been if the noises and distractions in ourselves had not prevented us from seeing and knowing all that was there to see and to know. We understand how peripherally we have stalked experience—any, all experience—and how thoroughly we could have known it if we had been able to be right at the center of it, where she has so perceptively and skillfully put us.

It is her skill, her process, of course, as well as her seeing, that creates her art. She tells us about this in her essay "On the Art of Fiction":

> Art, it seems to me, should simplify. That, indeed, is very nearly the whole of the higher artistic process; finding what conventions of form and what detail one can do without and yet preserve the spirit of the whole—so that all that one has supposed and cut away is there to the reader's consciousness as much as if it were in type on the page.

This is her own artistic process—mastery of the essential. We are sure that all the detail is there, almost in a Brueghel-like way, and yet she tells us that much has been eliminated. We believe that these scenes are a revelation to us of how much there is in a single experience, and how much we necessarily eliminate because the total is beyond the capacity of our senses to absorb. And yet she tells us that she has not given us the



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total, that the total simply is not there. This is skill, yes, but the stillness of direct, unclouded seeing as well, since in order to know what to eliminate, she had to see what was important to keep.

*Death Comes for the Archbishop* is surely one of the noblest books that exist, and in its fervor about true belief, one of the great monuments to Catholicism, a prose Magnificat. I had read it years and years ago, and had been moved. After this rereading of it, I closed the book feeling simply exalted, and then suddenly recalled hearing Bach played one afternoon by André Marchal in the Church of Saint Sulpice in Paris —an experience of being borne up and wrapped around in clouds of powerfully sublime sound. And so I recognized that *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was as much art suffused with religion (and Professor St. Peter says in *The Professor's House,* that "Art and religion . . . are the same thing in the end"), as Bach played by a great organist in an architecturally splendid and acoustically perfect church.

Willa Cather reached her zenith in it. It is the fullest expression of her development, of her aliveness to the natural and human world and to the history of it, of her acute perception engendered by this aliveness, and of her spirit, which was not only alive to it but cared passionately about it, and of her mind, which could coordinate these forces and put them into words. She wrote her masterpiece from this constellation of forces—again, the theme of transplantation and adaptation, survival and flowering, which the two French missionary priests develop surpassingly, as do the Mexicans and Spaniards and Frenchmen she makes live as vividly as any people she ever created, particularly the jubilantly alive Father Valliant. With the documentary-like structure of it, seeming like a series of short poetized historical episodes (and indeed the subject was partially inspired by the letters and biographies of two actual French priests of that time and place) and the seasons and snows and sandstorms and fragrances and temperatures and light—jewel light on canyon and mesa and desert and mission church—with the continual movement, movement of priests on mule-back, with all of this she creates the very flow and change of life itself. Her triumph was that by not imposing the contrivance of a conventional novelistic structure upon her concept of what she wanted to do in this book, she created actual movement, an ongoing episodic flow of man and nature, and with a stateliness, a calm narrative humanity akin to it. These episodes, like short stories or historical vignettes strung along a central theme, in which every nuance of Willa Cather's response to life is illumined by pure art, are like the little boxed scenes that border the central motif of a Persian miniature, giving it depth and richness and elaboration. "I had all my life wanted to do something in the style of legend," she tells us, "which is absolutely the reverse of dramatic treatment . . . something without accent, with none of the artificial elements of composition." Well, she succeeded peerlessly in *Death Comes for the Archbishop,* although she had, of course, used this same technique to some extent in *My Antonia,* and would use it again, somewhat, in *Shadows on the Rock.* She was capable of this lifelike flow. And she was capable of the perfect round contained completion of *My Mortal Enemy,* a master, obviously, of structure.

After *Shadows on the Rock* this amplitude of art diminished, although the richness of Willa Cather's life did not. Her sudden death was like one of her sunsets, serene and vibrant one moment, extinguished the next.

She was idealistic. She was moral. She costumed some of her central characters with these ardent beliefs, so that their identity is shrouded by them. Was this a flaw? Must it limit her power? Or her believability?

No. It doesn't matter, I think, that these super people who are "about life," rather than "life itself" dominate many of her stories, and show us the ideal, not the reality of virtue. For the preponderance of her other virtuous characters to whom prominent roles in life have not been assigned, are as real, as alive as any people ever written about. They are "life itself," the reality, not



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the ideal of virtue—a virtue that is not so much moral excellence as it is a valuing of life. Her monumental characters are just that, monuments, like churches to which people go to be told about the potential of the human spirit, and about realizable goals of virtue and strength. We get the message. And its idealism is of the utmost value. But we get it in another and really more natural way through the lively swarm of all the other exemplary people. In short, there is a strong strain in her work that is a kind of, yes, preachment of the value and the necessity of virtue. This was her central and timeless concern, applicable, I hope, to man in any era. She was always involved with essential and abiding values. And we need to be reminded of them.

What she cared most about—the natural world and the natural spirit—are the essentials that we ourselves care most about, although we may know it only dimly. And she tells us about the natural spirit directly, not as in evil presented directly, which makes good seem wonderfully desirable, but as good presented directly, which makes evil seem abhorrent, perhaps even remote. She tells us about integrity directly, through the elaboration of integrity itself, in a way that penetrates to the core of whatever integrity we ourselves have. And tells us to prize it, that it is the only thing. This is, I believe, one of the reasons why we are so significantly moved by her work—it reaches down into some well of knowledge in us, and touches whatever integrity remains there.

And yet her genius was much more than her capacity to inspire, if it was that at all. She did "write to the human heart." She loved. And the passion and clarity of this love went far beyond the love of man for man—it encompassed all of the human, and the natural world. Her love was a respect for everything alive. But her genius was that through this love, plus art, she could create life, could create for me the essence of greening fields, and of October twilight, and of a boy running along a country road.

And so we come back to the simple fact that it was the woman behind the art, or, rather, the woman and her art grown into one being. This was her unparalleled achievement. But let her have the last word, which is about Sarah Orne Jewett, or about all exceptional artistic effort, but also, however unconsciously, about herself: "If [a writer] achieves anything noble, anything enduring, it must be by giving himself absolutely to his material. And this gift of sympathy is his great gift; is the fine thing in him that alone can make his work fine . . . the very flower of himself and his genius."



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*ART IN AMERICA*

# The Tragic Dilemma of Modern Art

WILHELMINA VAN NESS

It is generally assumed that Hitler persecuted the "degenerate" artists and intellectuals of Germany and Europe because they represented formal tendencies that were opposed to Nazi politics and culture. The substance and forms of major twentieth-century art, entertainment and social forms are, however, so similar that they suggest that artists, entertainers and intellectuals are persecuted and banished from totalitarian states when their works and theories *compete* rather than *conflict* with the forms and goals of twentieth-century totalitarian states.

The half-time shows at football games, Maoist spectaculars, the elaborate dance production numbers of Busby Berkeley movie musicals from the thirties, many aspects of art nouveau, pop art and camp, and the spectacle formations and calisthenics of Nazi labor battalion troops on review in the Nuremburg stadium in 1933 for Leni Riefenstahl's feature-length documentary propaganda film, *The Triumph of the Will,* are obviously similar in form, content and taste. Similarly the propaganda barrage of government images and ideologies in modern totalitarian states does not differ substantially from the incessant assault of news, advertising and show-business media in the "free world"; similarities between the huge images and influence of political leaders and movie and rock music stars; the ubiquitous miniature television presence and incessant radio news and music noise, and the poster-slogan-button mentality—these are obviously related expressions of a single form. Nuremburg rallies, be-ins, love-ins, peace rallies and rock music festivals clearly evolved, or were provided, as satisfactions for essentially the same kinds of yearning for collective and mystical experiences. In pre-Nazi Germany fascination with the occult, the Orient, science fiction and futurism flourished, very much as these fascinations flourish today in America. Dada and surrealist artists in Europe *willed* substantially the same destruction of Europe and civilization that the Nazis and the war later accomplished in reality, and American artists and intellectuals have similarly willed and their will may also be done. Futurism, automatism and organicism are together today in a package that intrigues and frightens millions of Americans, in substantially the same technological and biological contexts that were politicized in Nazi ideology.

In the final analysis, art is about man and his relationship to and transcendance of the void. Certain kinds of art and society have plainly "died," like God, in this century, and other *totalitarian* forms have evolved to take their place, a fact of contemporary life that demands an adjustment, but not unquestioning acceptance. Mass visual forms, that is, photography, movies and television, have simultaneously limited and expanded, or have radically altered, the quality and quantity of information that is available to the senses. The communications miracle of television offers, as discernible sensory stimulae, five to ten shades of gray to the viewer of black-and-white television; and there are no repro-

✪ This essay is the concluding section of a book that WILHELMINA VAN NESS is writing about American art movements in the fifties and sixties. A graduate of the Cooper Union Art School, Ms. Van Ness has lived and worked in New York City as an artist and writer since 1955.



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duction or photographic processes that are capable of reproducing the full range of the natural color spectrum, or the distinctions within it, that the human eye is equipped to perceive. The forms of twentieth-century fine arts that have survived the communications revolution have had to be altered to accommodate it, and the success of the forms and content that remain is in most cases dependent on their being translated in some way into modern media forms. Abstract expressionist paintings photographed well, and photography often conferred significance, value and power, where none existed in the original work. The majority of art uses of photography have been deceptive and some have been absurd. The world of reproduced art images has been a chaos of distorted scales, colors, dimensions, false impressions and inferences, et cetera. During the abstract expressionist period, photographic enlargements of details from the works (sometimes damaged or ruined) of respected masters and cultures were regularly placed in art magazine reviews and feature articles beside reproductions of abstract works by contemporary artists and the similarities *between the photographs* were solemnly discussed and evaluated.

Photography has been a natural, primary cause of contemporary art forms becoming visually simpler—more graphic, colorful, blatant and stark—because these are qualities that are conveyed powerfully and intriguingly in photographs. Photography and twentieth-century photographic reproduction processes have been the natural carriers of the *news* of modern and contemporary art forms, and the chief educational aid and tool of art historians and teachers. The photographic image bank that has been created in this century is inconceivably rich in the quantity of images stored, but it is poor in the quality of its storage forms, and some forms of subtlety, complexity and depth simply cannot be recorded in them.

The dominant trends of modern and contemporary fine art in both Europe and America have been necessarily trivial, banal and comedic. No one has expressed this more plainly and truthfully than the greatest and most gifted modern artist, Pablo Picasso. Picasso's art touched every modern base briefly, and the artist mastered each of his phases in proportion to the degree of time and energy that each "experiment" warranted. Picasso was too spectacular and too complete a talent to brood over partial modern experiments or to deceive himself or others into believing that any one of the incomplete, fragmented segments of modern art was a viable totality. Picasso's works expressed, fully participated in, and caricatured the depth and extent of the tragic absurdity of the modern tradition; the ignorance and forgetfulness of cultural and human identity that was being accelerated within it; and the barbarism, banality and superficiality of the "culture" that remained when these crucial identities were gone.

The totality of Picasso's work and the alternative tradition of modern fine art have been tragic, but the natural structure and thrust of twentieth-century culture have prevented artists and intellectuals from expressing this directly. Modern artists and intellectuals in both Europe and America turned the nineteenth-century ideal of progress into futurism, integrated it into their alternative theories of culture and civilization, and applied it to the real fragmentation and disintegration of identity and society that proliferated around them. It became aesthetically and psychologically necessary for artists to justify the only art that could be created in the modern environment and the aesthetic and behavioral regressions into primitivism, madness and childishness that it often depicted and represented, as bizarre forms of progress. Modern art was represented as one of many expressions of sociological and organic truths that would become manifest to future generations. News, history and preeminently the future were used to justify and rationalize intrinsically degraded and inhumane art forms—forms that artists necessarily used to avoid committing themselves to direct, tragic and profoundly pessimistic assessments of modern and contemporary trends. This fundamental intel-



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lectual defensiveness and dishonesty forced militant twentieth-century intellectuals and artists repeatedly to define *regressive* aesthetic and social manifestations as *progressive* phenomena.

The modern movement has been ignorantly ridiculed and viciously attacked by an aesthetic Right in Europe and America for the obsessions of intellectuals and artists with primitivism, madness, childishness and ugliness. The substance of these accusations has sometimes been true, but not in the spirit in which they were made. These aspects of twentieth-century civilization have been only too tragically real, and the primitivism and related phenomena of the modern and contemporary movements, wherever they have occurred, have been accurate, truthful reflections and confirmations of the impact of modern civilization on culture and on human beings. Twentieth-century high culture in the West is necessarily, partially, a culture of aesthetic panic and fanaticism in which artists and intellectuals strive to replace diminishing reserves of traditional resources and values with a viable production line of synthetic substitutes. The alternative tradition was successfully used as a substitute spiritual and aesthetic Other for many years. It provided rationalizations for the fundamentally tragic, salvaging operation that modern and contemporary art necessarily became in the twentieth-century economy of spiritual and aesthetic scarcity in which artists were driven to invent increasingly extreme, ingenious ways to use the dwindling materials and resources that were left.

*Primitivism* was one of the earliest synthetics to be used systematically by twentieth-century artists to fill the breach. It was celebrated excitedly and extensively in European and American art and intellectual movements as a huge catchall of negative values and virtues, for substantially the same reasons that academics and traditionalists rejected it. Modern and contemporary artists and intellectuals approved the primitive virtues of inferiority, crudity, incompleteness and underdevelopment as condescendingly and uncarefully as traditionalists had rejected them, and were often attracted to primitive forms and mannerisms for the brutality and realism that could be expressed through them. The nonrational and irrational behavior of children and the insane was admired as the other side of maturity and rationality. Ultrarational science and mathematical philosophies and systems were studied as keys to power and were fascinating because of the vistas of coded randomness and unlimited Other realms of number and phenomena that they evoked.

Primitivism in art, culture and science was sometimes linked to purity and with the integrity of the simplest, most fundamental forms of matter and nature, forms usually defined and characterized by a mystifying simplicity or by organic, mindless beauty. Art nouveau and minimal art forms were, in part, extreme romantic and classical expressions of this mystique. The celebration of primitivism appreciably shortened the distance between art and natural history, but it failed spectacularly to subdue traditional cultural and racist distinctions and prejudices that classified the works of art of the black, red and brown races of mankind as generalized facts of natural history, not as art. Ironically, the primitives have been welcomed into the art museums *only* after the value of art as an elite, specialized, fully human activity has been practically destroyed, and as museum staffs and directors begin to seek functions for museums other than the preservation of past values for future generations. In keeping with many twentieth-century "triumphs," the victory of primitivism over the system has been both late and perverse. Such a victory means defeat for the high standards of individual and collective human awareness and civilization that are created and experienced in *all* cultures briefly and periodically. These standards are the intensely civilized cultural "moments" in the lives of individuals and societies that provide the crucial discoveries and memories that sustain all communities through the long primitive ages that are the normal conditions of civilization and awareness.



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In the twentieth-century West it has become profoundly necessary to extend the meaning of culture and civilization beyond its Judeo-Christian, ancient, and oriental meanings and restrictions—to extend it to nothing less than the whole of mankind. To date, however, the fetish of primitivism has implied a celebration of low rather than high common denominators, and primitivism has been used to inspire, excuse or justify every major form of aesthetic and social regression in this century, from the loss or destruction of art to Nazism and other totalitarian social manifestations. High common denominators do exist that do not rationalize people in terms of groups, trends, labels and slogans, and that are based on the interior image of consciousness, identity and desire that all human beings participate in and share. But these have not been generally applied and they do not in fact lend themselves to application and use. It is only to the degree that art and society become deep reflections and responses to human and natural needs and conditions that either is truly relevant or profound. Most modern and contemporary forms have not provided such responses, and this has been the primary reason that they have been profoundly deficient forms.

All modern and contemporary art, technological and social forms, have been, for a variety of reasons, profoundly nonsupportive of human needs and values. Human needs to admire and enjoy have been systematically ignored, and values have been abandoned or deferred to the judgments of history and the future. This consistent absence of value and support for people living in the present has provoked a pertinent public distrust of artists and of modern and contemporary art forms. In the sense of Nietzsche's aside ("For you know of course that all great modern artists suffer from bad consciences? . . ."), the great twentieth-century artists like Picasso are known to have had bad consciences about the fundamental corruption of art in this century and are distinguished from the lesser artists by the profundity and sincerity of their lack of belief. Like Picasso, the great artists have had no choice other than to become tragic, directly truthful and silent; or to become comedic and deviously truthful. Most artists have understandably and humanely chosen the latter course because the alternative is professional or personal suicide. The *salon,* the comedic, and futurism together have been practically the only factors that have intervened between twentieth-century fine arts and cultural forms and their literal real death. The lesser artists and the public have needed and wanted to believe in art and they have believed, in varying degrees, in degraded forms of it.

The dominant subjects and obsessions of artists and intellectuals in the twentieth century have been social, in the broadest meaning of the word, not aesthetic, and they have helped art to die. Nietzsche once said, "The artist chooses his subjects. That is his mode of praising." A major cause of the modern artist's tragedy is precisely the awkward array of social subjects that has been left to him to praise in this century. The absolute ideals of truth, the good, the beautiful and nature literally belong to past ages of belief and are conspicuously absent today. The most effective modern and contemporary artists have not tried to revive or evoke them. Twentieth-century forms of society, entertainment and art are the entirely natural consequences and forms of these absences and of the systematic substitution of social and technical priorities for aesthetics that has taken place over the past two hundred years.

Modern states, whether they are moderate social democracies or brutal dictatorships, exist potentially to fulfill all reasonable human needs. All modern states encroach on or drastically alter the traditional functions and uses of art when they administer and regulate the material lives, minds and emotions of their citizens. The collective values that they impose necessarily drive the traditional instincts for art and aestheticism to compete, to become Other or to be irrelevant. The words *modern* and *contemporary,* as used by artists and intellectuals, imply a posthuman, postaesthetic emphasis that is



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usually social or technological. In totalitarian states, artists are unsubtly conscripted to serve and glorify the ideal of the state, to become posthuman and post-aesthetic for an official modern or contemporary cause. Aesthetics are treated like peacetime luxuries during a war and are ruthlessly suppressed when they conflict with the social goals of the state.

In the Scandinavian and other social democracies, states have humanely won long, subtle wars of attrition with the aesthetic, and their citizens have made the depressing discovery that men cannot live happily on social services alone. Australia, Canada and America are three similar, continent-sized, essentially aesthetically vacant modern states in which fine artists and intellectuals have suffered extreme identity crises in relation to traditional world cultural patterns and priorities. Australian and Canadian artists and intellectuals have been maximally impressed and obsessed by the natural immensity and variety of their countries and have been correspondingly tortured by feelings of cultural inferiority and isolation in time and place from world cultural standards.

The natural, technological and mythological abundance of the American civilization has been similarly the traditional and only consistently viable subject of American artists and intellectuals. In the 1930s, American artists were employed by the federal government to create formal works of painting and sculpture for propaganda uses, to decorate government buildings with murals and sculpture that idealized America as a people and as a state. After the short-lived abstract expressionist emphasis on European painting aesthetics and holiday away from the subject of America and social relevance, American artists returned via the assemblage-happening and pop movements—almost organically and involuntarily—to the traditional subjects of American artlessness and uprootedness. When they expanded and interpreted traditional forms of American uprootedness to signify the general catastrophic impact of twentieth-century culture on art and human beings, they joined forces with the mainstream of twentieth-century social and propaganda culture.

Cubism in Europe and abstract expressionism in America have been almost the only aesthetic islands in an otherwise Sargasso Sea of modern and contemporary social art; and both movements were short-lived, unsuccessful attempts by artists to bring the twentieth century and art together in an aesthetic form. The disparate Other movements of dada, surrealism, the Bauhaus, assemblage, pop art and the happenings operated from exactly opposite premises: as free-lance programs and theories in which artists tried to translate or merge aesthetic forms into social forms, or in which aesthetics were abandoned altogether for social theory. The artists of the Other movements created violent, antisocial forms of social expression or they articulated suggestions and programs for institutional, totalitarian forms of social regeneration and reform through art, theater and architecture.

This tendency of almost all modern and contemporary art forms to become social, essentially propaganda forms; for artists to sponsor mixtures of social and aesthetic ideology, and to formulate or participate in social programs, whether state sponsored or competitive and Other —these are perhaps among the most revealing and discouraging features of twentieth-century high culture. Propaganda, whether it is applied to good, evil, commercial, political or aesthetic ends, is a degraded, almost entirely inarticulate form of communication. If one ascribes to Simone Weil's fragment definition of art as "composition on several planes," art put to propaganda or advertising uses, regardless of the merit of the product, is a farce. A propaganda or advertising message contains an infinite number of inferences, but the propaganda form is a closed formula that prevents the message from occupying more than one plane at a time, whereas contradiction is an indispensable property of the nature of truth. Propaganda or advertising messages are calls to perform one simple mental,



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emotional or physical action—to fight, believe, strike, build, hate, love, buy, et cetera—and are designed to exclude, subvert or ignore the rational human capacity for perceiving that other possibilities exist. Propaganda mischievously (or viciously) infers that contradictions are irrelevant, when they are actually among the most relevant, precious, psychological possessions of human beings. Art cannot be limited to the service of one master, whether it is a state, a commercial product, an art ideology, or a mystical or political ideal, without violating a critical relationship to truth, which cannot and does not exist in a propaganda environment.

The capacity of human beings to desire truth, and to be oriented toward it, is as precious a social resource as it is an aesthetic one. One of the most consistently vicious features of twentieth-century culture is that it has almost wholly incapacitated modern and contemporary men from being able to desire directly or orient themselves toward truth. Indirect, teasing propaganda forms and variations have to a great extent become the environment, and are gradually creating a closed information system that outside and sometimes higher stimulae are being increasingly prevented from entering. These stimulae, the infinite variety of perceived natural phenomena, and the contradictions and correspondences they evoked, were the traditional sources of art, and their literal disappearance is a major cause of the plight of art in this century.

The majority of twentieth-century aesthetic, social and technical forms have been so fundamentally destructive of physical nature and natural stimulae on a global basis, and have so rationalized and degraded the image of human nature, that the nightmare possibility exists that the future of twientieth-century culture will be a form of entropy—if current social and technological processes are allowed to proceed uninterruptedly along their present course; that a series of irreversible processes may have been set in motion that, if they continue, may end in a final ordering of human nature and natural stimulae. The most advanced twentieth-century societies and art forms are partially experiments with systems that create and regulate total, ordered disorder, systems in which the possibility of variation is being reduced to the point of becoming unknown and therefore impossible, and from which the possibility of any upward change of level is increasingly excluded. Mystical and aesthetic correspondences and phenomena have been the traditional channels and devices through which possibilities for reform and refreshment have been made known to man; but in this society, mystical and aesthetic phenomena have been increasingly degraded to the same barren, informationless forms of the twentieth-century propaganda environment and may be useless *now* to create or evoke the traditional leavening influences within it.

There are certain physical and spiritual facts at the heart of this world that cannot be ignored, however hard one may wish or try to ignore them. One of these is, that at the heart of every correction or potential change of level from one that is lower to one that is higher, the effective inspiration for change proceeds from the higher level to the lower one, not vice versa. The commonplace physical demonstration of this is the pot of hot water on the unlit stove that gradually cools to the temperature of the room in which it is standing unless someone relights the burner under it. Obviously the fire is hotter than the water in the example. What is not so obvious is that the physical or spiritual temperature of any object or condition that is to be raised must be below, or must have dropped below, the temperature of the energy that is available to raise it, or no upward change of level can take place. In the sense of this demonstration, the metaphysical temperature of a propaganda environment is low and it can only act naturally upon a condition that is "cooler" or lower than itself. Under normal circumstances propaganda cannot furnish energies that are higher than itself; this accounts for the tendency of the disorder of a propaganda environment to increase naturally and for the general



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level of energy in the environment to decline naturally until there is a stultifying equilibrium from which escape or relief is very difficult if not impossible. Art and the social are extremely difficult, but not impossible, to bring together; but they cannot be combined on a propaganda level without distorting, degrading and dissipating the literal energies available for creativity and work in both.

Simone Weil has said that love is a direction, not a state of the soul. The same may be perhaps said of truth, that truth is for human beings a *negentropic* orientation. The progressive destruction of links to the natural environment and of nature as a source of art and truth, and of the few tiny openings to the outside that exist in this nearly closed system that are represented by the term *grace,* and the twisting or reducing of practically every available image to its propaganda forms and uses in this society—these have created catastrophic psychological as well as physical effects. Human beings are being increasingly driven to propaganda forms as the only source of images. If the current pace of the physical destruction of nature continues, propaganda images will become, by default, the only environment that human beings will have as a source of information and truth, a nightmare that is almost a reality in this society and in many others. In the nearly closed physical systems of the earth, energies decline, wastes accumulate and levels of pollution gradually rise. The same emergency condition tends to exist on a metaphysical level as the feedback from destroyed and increasingly informationless propaganda and advertising images necessarily becomes less and less, and the images themselves gradually become forms of accumulated, circulating wastes that enervate and poison rather than nourish.*

The modern and contemporary fine art movements in Europe in the 1920s and in America in the sixties ground to substantially the same dead-level stops: the expressionist wings became mired in dada, surrealist, assemblage and other social and propaganda forms; and artists in the classical wings withdrew psychologically into the cool, protective shells of the new objectivity in Germany and pop and minimal art forms in America. While general levels of aesthetic and human taste and social behavior rapidly declined about them in both environments, artists and intellectuals of both periods increasingly allied aesthetics to social and mystical forms. Several of the links between the aesthetic-social-mystical forms of the artists and those of the forthrightly totalitarian political and social philosophies and forms of the twentieth century are spectacularly displayed in the opening paragraph of Walter Gropius's *The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus* (1923):

> The dominant spirit of our epoch is already recognizable although its form is not yet clearly defined. The old dualistic world-concept which envisaged the ego in opposition to the universe is rapidly losing ground. In its place is rising the idea of a universal unity in which all opposing forces exist in a state of absolute balance. This dawning recognition of the essential oneness of all things and their appearances endows creative effort with a fundamental inner meaning. No longer can anything exist in isolation. We perceive every form as the embodiment of an idea, every piece of work as a manifestation of our innermost selves. Only work which is the product of inner compulsion can have spiritual meaning. Mechanized work is lifeless, proper only to a lifeless machine. So long, however, as machine-economy remains an end in itself rather than a means of freeing the intellect from the burden of mechanical labor, the individual will remain enslaved and society will remain disordered. The solution depends on a change in the individual's attitude toward his work,

* A stunning recent example of an image destroyed by propaganda uses, and deprived of its potential to confer grace and to become a profound human resource, is the image of the whole earth as it has been photographed from space. This image is one of the most poignant, literal perspectives on the human condition to be received from outside the immediate environment in the history of the world—and it has been used to sell magazines, savings bonds, gasoline, paper products, orange drink and the CBS evening news. Some artists have also thoughtlessly repeated and exploited the image.



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not on the betterment of his outward circumstances, and the acceptance of this principle is of decisive importance for new creative work.

The Bauhaus was an immensely influential school of modern art and architecture that was founded on the idealism and false hopes of Weimar culture and democracy in Germany in the 1920s. The Bauhaus program mixed social utopianism and an art nouveau enthusiasm for a revival of craft with the three fundamental errors of German culture: egotism, militance and obsession with abstraction. The Other totalitarian desires and proposals of Bauhaus artists and intellectuals and the later actual totalitarian acts of the Nazis in Germany were linked closely by the common taste for organicism that both expressed. The Bauhaus program for reforming the aesthetic, spiritual and social sensibilities of the world proposed a cultural juggernaut that was conceived in terms of the individual artist's becoming the totalitarian and being permitted to impose his dreams and ambitions on an essentially passive, consenting society.

It was taken for granted in Bauhaus theory, and is still a central feature of a great deal of modern and contemporary aesthetic theory, that it was the modern artist's duty and mission to plan and redesign the environment with or without the enthusiastic permission of its inhabitants. The Nazis arrogated these powers to the party and the state when they came to power in Germany. The potential to abstract and manipulate people as well as things was inherent from the beginning in Bauhaus ideology, and, in America, Bauhaus ideology has been enormously influential in advertising design and architecture, the two most manipulative American art forms. The Bauhaus architectural legacy in America has been both a symbolic and an actual dehumanizing one. Both the International and Brutalism styles of corporate headquarters architecture derive from it and serve and symbolize many of the most profoundly dehumanizing institutions and trends of twentieth-century American society.

Concerning the stage, Gropius wrote:

> Theatrical performance, which has a kind of orchestral unity, is closely related to architecture. As in architecture the character of each unit is merged into the higher life of the whole, so in the theatre a multitude of artistic problems form a higher unity with a law of its own.
>
> In its origins a theatre grew from a metaphysical longing; consequently it is the realization of an abstract idea. The power of its effect on the spectator and listener thus depends on the successful translation of the idea into optically and audibly perceptible forms.
>
> This the Bauhaus attempts to do. Its program consists in a new and clear formulation of all problems peculiar to the stage. The special problems of space, of the body, of movement, of form, light, color and sound are investigated; training is given in body movements, in the modulation of musical and spoken sounds; the stage space and figures are given form.
>
> The Bauhaus theatre seeks to recover primordial joy for all the senses, instead of mere aesthetic pleasure.

Organic analogies between architecture, theater and life have been constantly juxtaposed in the modern and contemporary movements with the themes of abstraction, parts, destruction and dismemberment. They originated apparently with men who were deprived of, or became insensitive to, experience, but who desired it ardently at almost any cost. The Bauhaus was founded in a society and time by men who were not naturally whole, happy, spontaneous or free. The Bauhaus generation and the generations of artists and architects who succeeded them were unable to experience "mere aesthetic pleasure" in any satisfactory sense, partially because "pleasure" is not a total emotion and does not confer a sense of power. The German generation tried to exchange it for a mystical sensation of "primordial joy," which sometimes briefly created this illusion. The same need for "primordial" emotions and satisfactions afflicted whole populations during the twenties and thirties. It drove them to seek experiences of reality through belief and participation in



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Nazi and other totalitarian political religions.

Extremely revealing of the general level and state of health of modern culture in its pre-Nazi German form in the 1920s is the problem of speech in drama as it is posed in the following timorous transcription of a passage taken from a 1927 Bauhaus lecture by Oskar Schlemmer:

> We admit that we have cautiously avoided this problem so far, not because it does not concern us, but because we are well aware of its significance and want to master it slowly. For the time being we are satisfied with the mute play of gesture and movement, with pantomime, but firmly believe that someday we shall develop speech quite naturally from them. We want to understand words, not as literature, but in an elementary sense, as an event, as though they were heard for the first time.

Modern and contemporary art forms have for the most part tragically confirmed the real breakdown that accelerated about them and have been absolutely accurate symptoms of the sickness of the culture that created them. As an expression of a civilized, sophisticated intellect, Schlemmer's declaration of purpose and admission of panic before "literature" was terribly tragic. He and the community he lived in were, however, suffering all the symptoms of an acute nervous breakdown; both were evading the slightest, smallest movement or commitment in the direction of maturity or stasis lest it involve some form of death. What comes to mind is the plight of the allegorical centipede, that becomes paralyzed when it tries to determine consciously which foot to move forward first.

The Bauhaus was created in a fever of idealism and altruism, and desire for freedom, liberation and mystical expression—in the midst of the real shambles of the social, economic, political and cultural environment of Germany in the 1920s. The theologian Paul Tillich, at another end of the fabulous intellectual and philosophical traditions of German culture, revealed how he and his friends first received the blow of Hitler's coming to power:

> And then it happened that at the end of the road of German philosophy and theology, the figure of Hitler appeared. At the time of our emigration it was not so much his tyranny and brutality which shocked us, but the unimaginatively low level of his cultural expressions. We suddenly realized that if Hitler can be produced by German culture, something must be wrong with this culture.

German culture was an extreme expression of modern culture and it cultivated a tyrannical need for aesthetic and personal salvation in the German people while it systematically constructed a modern, technological, bureaucratic state that opposed and thwarted fulfillment of these needs. The Germans were the first people sophisticated enough to try to pass ultrarationally through a spiritual crisis with modernity. The end of their efforts to rationally conserve the irrational and to ally it to bureaucracy and technique was the astonishingly regressive gene of the Nazi political state.

America in the late sixties and early seventies and pre-Hitler Germany are dismayingly similar as cultural and social environments. Weimar culture and the Nazi political state were in retrospect relatively natural ends of both German and modern culture. The Nazi state was an astonishingly regressive social gene that rationalized and applied many of the most vicious and decadent practices of late classical antiquity: political despotism, classical cruelties, slavery and mass exterminations and deportations for both sacrificial and administrative ends. Rationalist, humanist and Greco-Christian ideals were formally abolished in Nazi Germany and ethical polarities similar to those that European dada and surrealist artists had mischievously dreamed of reversing were systematically and ruthlessly reversed. The Other in specifically German cultural forms of organicism, orientalism, the occult, art nouveau, nostalgia, futurism and automatism became an institutionalized fact in the Nazi state. The Nazi state similarly institutionalized extreme versions of myths and fears that tens of millions of Germans believed in implicitly long before National



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Socialism was ever invented. Hitler's strident allusions to overpopulation and the evils of the cities in *Mein Kampf* were not invented out of a void, but were rooted deeply in a widespread pop-science consciousness of an imminent European overpopulation and scarcity of land, and of a later world overpopulation and attendant scarcities.

The animism of streets and cities that appeared in German movies in the 1920s turned the cities into the equivalents of haunted forests and expressed similarly hysterical fears and suspicions of cosmopolitanism, criminality and the organic character of city life. Nazi blood and soil programs and racial policies derived from and exploited these and other hysterical mythologies. The official pop mysticism of the Nazi regime was rooted in a long train of *Volk* and amateur nature mysticisms of the East, of race, countryside, youth, sun, landscape and Germanness that had evolved and flourished in nineteenth-century Germany as a weird accompaniment to the scientific and scholarly advances of the "high" German intellectual and university culture. Popularizations of Darwin's evolutionary theories were extravagantly rationalized; pop mysticism and pop science were applied together in *Volk* and related "philosophies" in nineteenth-century and pre-Hitler Germany to justify and rationalize traditional popular hatreds of the Jews and the cities, and became the ideological and "scientific" foundations for the *real* extermination policies of the Nazi period. George L. Mosse has suggested that Germans were able to come to rational terms with their cities only after the physical destruction of the cities in the bombings.

In the fifty years that separated Nietzsche from Hitler, German culture encouraged Germans to make intense efforts on a variety of cultural levels to simultaneously rationalize and irrationalize vast areas of human knowledge and experience. Marx, Freud, Jung, Nietzsche, Weber, Heisenberg, Gropius, Hesse, Mann and Tillich were only a few of the celebrity intellectuals of German culture whose theories and rationalizations have profoundly influenced the methods and goals of contemporary American intellectual and aesthetic culture. The rationalizations of German science also very significantly underlie most major twentieth-century advances in science, medicine and technology; and the traditional scholarly German combination of scientific humanism and scientific inhumanity deforms the social statistical sciences and technologies that are routinely applied today to the study and manipulation of human behavior. This "humanization" of science and the corresponding dehumanization of man into a subject for study and manipulation is a primary fruit of German culture that has affected the whole of modern and contemporary culture. The widespread crisis of human identity and the loss of art in the West in the twentieth century are related phenomena that derived to a great extent from the systematic applications of these predominantly German principles in both science and art. The borderline forms that both the arts and sciences are today, after artists and scientists have guided them toward each other, are major expressions of this crisis.

In America in the fifties and sixties a volatile mixture of modern German and traditional American culture took place and became the subliminal subject of American artists and intellectuals; neo-Germanic obsessions with power, will-lessness, thingness and automatism became standard preoccupations of American artists. In America the void has been experienced traditionally as the *lack* of art in an environment of technology, citizenship and entertainment; whereas in Europe the problem has been experienced as the *loss* of art in an environment that has become increasingly modern and like the American one. Contemporary American visual artists learned somewhat ironically to experience the indigenous surrealism of America as a surreal form *from* the ideas and works of European artists and poets after many of these had discovered and used America as a nightmarishly apt metaphor for the surrealism of modern culture.



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In the thirties and forties the exhibitions and publicity drives of the Museum of Modern Art popularized the modern movements as agonizing but necessary cultural consequences of the uprootedness that followed in the wake of nineteenth-century industrialization. Modern art was defined and promoted as a revolutionary vehicle for expressing the kind of disparity of forms, content and proportions that was expressed in the humiliating absurdities of the assembly line, and in the possibilities for distortion and play with time and space prophesied in relativity theory and symbolized and synthesized in the dreamlike freedom to use slow motion and freeze-action in the movies. After the Second World War, Americans impressed and influenced artists and poets throughout the world with heightened American forms of a surrealism and uprootedness that had been in many instances learned from Europe, but that the nature and fact of America had partially, initially inspired. In this way America has been a consistent, multilevel metaphor of uprootedness in the culture of the modern world since its founding and is today its ultimate rationalization, a culture dominated by the mechanical, electronic and social sciences and one that is correspondingly afflicted by a spiritual crisis of numbing dimensions.

The German breakdown into Nazism is no longer categorized as an isolated German regression or as a consequence of a concatenation of a single nation's history and humiliation, social confusion and economic disorder. Religious writers have recognized for many years that it was a severe religious crisis. In the 1930s Simone Weil repeatedly characterized it as a clear manifestation of a European spiritual crisis, and Teilhard de Chardin once described it as a perverted expression of the mystical evolutionary progress toward the Point Omega that he saw as the meaning of the world and mankind.

In pre-World War I Germany and in the Weimar prelude to the Nazi era, the whole bizarre panorama of traditional Other manifestations thrived in individualistic forms: in the yearnings of individuals for the unlimited and for power, for organic, totalitarian forms of personal involvement in art and politics; for mysticism in the forms of the occult, the East and utopianism; for the extension and deepening of perception and experience through art, drugs, crime and insanity; for satanism and eroticism—yearnings for precisely the same Other phenomena and experiences that have tormented and intrigued many Americans since the sixties. In pre-Hitler Germany the Other flourished in politically neutral forms on both the Left and Right and in the political extremes of Communist and Nazi ideologies. When the Nazi dictatorship was installed, it provided a social order that responded to the essentially neutral desires of millions of Germans for a variety of Other manifestations and satisfactions. The regime institutionalized the predominantly Rightist forms of the mystique and persecuted the Left and related forms of the competition.

The Other is always the absent object of desire—illusion—anything that is *not* at any given moment, and it is the traditional subject of art. Reality and illusion are always perversely exchanging places. In wartime the Other is a real need and longing for peace; in peacetime it is an equally real need and longing for a condition of war that grows steadily in individuals and societies until it gradually ceases to be Other and a desired object and is implemented as a real activity. Totalitarianism is an obvious, extreme Other form of the detachment and fragmentation encouraged by modern and contemporary cultural forms, that is similarly always alternately being desired as an illusion and implemented as a reality. The real nature of every community that human beings create and maintain is determined by the nature of what its inhabitants agree to exclude as the Other, and how they repress or otherwise accommodate the yearnings for it that are always present.

Nothing demonstrates the emotional and psychological collusion and competition



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of art, entertainment and totalitarian political dictatorship in the twentieth century as related Other forms more plainly than the fact that no one of the three coexists peacefully or freely with the other two in any modern or contemporary community. The nearly total victory of entertainment in contemporary America and in many parts of the world has been obtained at the expense of the death of art in much the same way and for many of the same reasons that tragedy and the arena did not thrive together in Rome. Unlike the Greeks, who filled their voids with tragic rituals of reconciliation and recognition and accepted metaphysical weaknesses and limits, the Romans filled theirs with strategies of diversion and escape; and artists and entertainers in Rome were subject to precisely the same constraints and compulsions as those exercised by twentieth-century totalitarian regimes. The total needs of total states in every age necessarily infringe on the freedom and independence of artists and entertainers.

Similarities between the final forms of European art and entertainment in the last stages of their independence during the 1920s and the nature of political totalitarianism are too striking to ignore. Modern and contemporary art and entertainment forms in every case end as total social and propaganda forms, or as forms of total social negation—with artists literally sacrificing the aesthetic as a weakness for propaganda and mystical forms that promise power—shortly before the forms themselves dissolve into the real social holocaust. In these final stages, art and entertainment forms demand practically the same real involvement and sacrifices from artists and audiences that totalitarian dictatorships demand from politicians and citizens, and tend, not only to break down traditional barriers between art and reality, but to become surrogate forms of totalitarianism that anticipate and ease the transition toward the real thing.

Dada and surrealist artists in Europe were not, therefore, fascist or Nazi philosophers or activists, but they imagined and prophesied unlimited vistas of the kind of social and aesthetic destruction that the Nazi regime made real, and they acquainted and familiarized their audiences with the possibilities of these dreams being made real. In the same manner, assemblage and pop artists were not literal fascists either, and the happenings were not the literal precursors of guerrilla warfare, burning cities and urban pollution; but through the works of assemblage, pop and happenings artists, audiences romanticized and familiarized themselves with ideas of unlimited forms of destruction, violence and waste before these things became social realities.

The unhappy real fate of artists and entertainers in twentieth-century totalitarian states of both the Right and Left is the final confirmation that a severe conflict of interest and competition exists among artists, entertainers and totalitarian political systems and personalities. The Nazi regime created a climate that directly threatened and in some instances took the lives of politicized artists and intellectuals, and censored or destroyed their works. No less significantly, the Nazi regime rigidly controlled entertainment and prevented German movie audiences from transferring *fatigue* (literally the hard-core physical and metaphysical weariness that extreme and prolonged conditions of public and personal stress induce) and affection to Hollywood movie idols(!) by banning most Hollywood features from German screens. The aesthetic taste of the Nazi regime was propagandist, social and "pop," and the Propaganda Ministry protected the official taste from every form of public competition.

In the immediate post-World War II years, Americans began to be naturally deprived of the same movies that both Left and Right totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century have feared and banned so consistently. At the same time, a minority of American artists, still imbedded in the essentially artless, American pop-movie culture, collided with and adapted some of the most extreme forms of modern art to contemporary pop media and entertainment uses. The excessive romanticism,



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individualism and nihilism of American art and intellectual movements in the fifties and sixties were partially synthetic responses learned from the modern European movements. But they were real in the degree that they accurately reflected the intensity of desire for almost anything other than America, and they suggested the dimensions of the void that had begun to afflict a society that was literally artless and that had lost its only traditional Other receptacle for fatigue and anxiety—the movies and show-business glamour and fantasy.

Assemblage and pop artists, who personally attended double and triple-feature movies nightly, who kept blaring radios tuned to rock and roll disc jockeys, and television sets badly-adjusted so as to roll or oscillate idiotically, expressed these voids in their works and themes of holocaust and mixtures of movie, national, commercial and political personality myths. Their works intuitively confirmed and depicted the devastating destruction of barriers between entertainment illusions and political realities that occurred in American culture in the fifties and sixties.

Every advanced modern and contemporary society is obviously totalitarian in some degree and both leaders and citizens in modern totalitarian states attain a degree of sophistication, leisure and capacity to abstract—to dream huge dreams, and then to implement them—that is maddening in its potential. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany became the most technologically advanced, rationalized modern state in the world. It became an environment that methodically suffocated its citizens with rationalism, militarism and bureaucracy and correspondingly starved them of individuality, romance and practically every legitimate opportunity for real experience, the desire of the individual to be in touch with himself and the natural environment. The Nazi phenomenon was a bizarre collection of ugly Other responses that many Germans became too fatigued and maddened to resist, and that many were tempted to try in their search for reality and experience.

Significantly, Nazi Germany lasted only twelve years, in contrast to the literal thousand years of Rome, Babylon and many similar ancient totalitarian societies that expressed and practiced many of the same excesses; and Nazi Germany was literally encircled, contained and reformed by its "normal" neighbors—Great Britain, Russia and America. All of these suffer today, however, from even more surreal and aggravated versions of the same twentieth-century tensions and pressures that drove the Germans insane. The "normal" communities that surround America, the most likely candidate to express the contemporary madness in its most extreme forms, are, moreover, *all* totalitarian, surreally artless or postaesthetic in some degree—the Soviet Union, China, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Africa, Rhodesia, Great Britain, Scandinavia, most of Europe, Latin America and black Africa—and it is difficult to conceive of any viable, desirable restraints or reforms being imposed on an "insane" America by one or any combination of them.

A profound antithesis of art and America has existed primarily because of the success of America. Should this success vanish factually and mythically—and America fail—the contradiction would be finally resolved.

The success of America has been achieved as an evasion and in violation of much of the stored traditional wisdom of the world and has, to date, made this wisdom, and the truth and art that are included in it, seem to be irrelevant. America has "worked" spectacularly on the other side of art, wisdom and truth, succeeded fabulously in spite of them and, as traditional and contemporary American art forms suggest, no counter-strategies have had any measurable effect in relieving the metaphysical burdens of this success.

Even if American and modern and contemporary culture should fail together and the traditional wisdom of the world be vindicated, however, it is highly unlikely that art could be returned to the world, because there are real and metaphysical barriers that separate everyone living in



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the world today from this past. The same mixture of continuity and discontinuity exists between contemporary and traditional American art forms and contemporary and traditional America, and makes any literal revival of older, pre-World War II social values and forms impossible and actually repellant. There have been breakthroughs of individual consciousness and society, and Americans and all peoples are now in the contemporary world for better or worse.

Contemporary American artists and intellectuals have framed their visions of doom and disaster for America in the forms of the European modern movements and were, for the most part, members of a generation that was haunted by the real Nazi regression that had been halted in their time. Many intellectuals and creative people generally have taken it for granted that an American regression would take this form, a prophecy that is not entirely accurate and one that has not yet been fulfilled in reality.

There have been enormous quantities of thoughtless and often unscrupulous exploitation of paranoia and apocalypse since the assemblage era by American artists and intellectuals generally: works and acts by artists who have been romantically engrossed in the act of creating potentially self-fulfilling prophecies.

At the time of this writing, America is not a formal fascist or Nazi-type dictatorship. It is, moreover, very unlikely that the American totalitarian form will ever assume the strident romantic focus of the Nazi period. It is much more likely that America's form of dictatorship is rapidly transforming the country into its own banana republic, that the American government is beginning to resemble Latin American dictatorships and the governments of South Africa and Rhodesia. The American dictatorship seems to be becoming a natural politicized expression of a complex, troubled, multiracial society in which an entropic level of injustice, disproportion and repression has developed, a society in which a perpetual ferment of dissent and "revolution" can fester endlessly and have little or no chance of actually affecting anything.

Interesting grounds for comparing contemporary American advertising and entertainment forms and Maoist ideological forms also exist. Both systems have managed to create cultural and social environments in which art and politics are indistinguishable from each other and show business, and are always purveyed in a show-business form. The condition of an entropy of artlessness and postaestheticism is, moreover, a worldwide, cross-cultural phenomenon and every culture afflicted by it is probably permanently spiritually crippled.

Finally, we have the phenomenon of the migrations of political, aesthetic and intellectual refugees and *emigrés* from dictatorships to free countries and cultures in the twentieth century. Many American professional artists and intellectuals complain of, or fear, repression and are seriously (or sardonically) considering leaving the country. Canada and Australia are high on the list of desirable havens. Many personal and professional motivations, beyond the most obvious social, propaganda ones, have contributed to decisions of this sort being taken.

The New York art world disintegrated as a center of culture or fun during the late 1960s and is wholly corrupt today as a cultural center. It is literally no longer prestigious or fun to be an artist or part of the art world. The New York art environment has been, moreover, substantially used up and worn out by visual artists and audiences alike, and creative people, who are still functioning in it, are naturally attracted to and performing for, and in, less sophisticated, still unjaded markets where their works will be spontaneously admired and enjoyed again.

Most American artists have been sincerely appalled by the decade-long war in Indochina and the obvious trends toward (and current realities of) domestic political dictatorship in this country. Many have sincerely wished to separate themselves from a multilayered structure of historical and contemporary guilt, but some have also used



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up art, New York City and America—and have talked of leaving them like transients checking out of a hotel.

In a very profound sense, there is not much left of the aesthetic in the New York art world environment at the present time. The surviving art is, for the most part, artless. Museum staffs and artists by the hundreds have abandoned art, in part simply to find something entertaining to do in a world without it. Some of this activity is the latest installment of a traditional, continuing *salon* play with crisis and fashionable political and social issues in the only forms that remain—the social and propaganda ones.

Artists who have discussed flight over the past few years tend to be attracted to English-speaking or South American societies: societies that are like America; societies that will provide artists with physical comforts and professional status; societies that are less advanced or similar forms of this culture; societies that are contemporary, postaesthetic, white, or elitist in rather traditional ways; societies that are subliminally or actually troubled by forms of the same problems that afflict America; societies with alert, talented men and women who are responsive to, and anxious to learn, participate in and express for themselves *avant* forms of the American-modern malaise.

Essentially, the "refugees" tend to desire a hospitable environment in which it will be possible to exploit further the aesthetic and social forms that symbolize and express many of the sicknesses and excesses they wish to flee. The elitist refugee emigrations to America in the twenties and thirties have had sordid and/or dismaying side effects. The American careers of Brecht and Mann were profoundly eccentric and exploitative in the American environment, and the power and inventiveness of the German expressionist artist, George Grosz, was substantially diluted and diminished. Enormous numbers of artists, scientists, teachers, entertainers and intellectuals-at-large came to America in the thirties to have the freedom to continue to practice a culture that had, in some instances, contributed to and exploited the terrible conditions that the *emigrés* had fled.

In the fifties and sixties, the New York art world *salon* environment thrived aesthetically and commercially on an awakened nostalgia for the glamour and corruption of a Berlin-type art environment, a nostalgia that evoked a combined shudder and thrill of recognition in people who had experienced the pre-Hitler Berlin period, and, in some quarters, a weird joy that self-fulfilling prophecies about America, nourished fearfully and hopefully for many years, would finally come true.

The morality of the idea of flight from one's culture or one's country in time of trouble is probably always questionable; at least a few of those who remained—like Dietrich Bonhoeffer—seem, in retrospect, to have behaved with more enduring human dignity than some of those who left.

Also questionable is the aesthetic use of any reality to gratify personal ambition, to create profit, or for purposes of what Susan Sontag has called "emotional recreation." One of the worst sins of the modern-contemporary culture is that it has become a system for transforming everything real into grist for an art, entertainment, news and advertising mill.

Simone Weil once defined beauty in a fragment definition as a "stop on the part of the fabricating imagination." It has not been possible to love either beauty or truth in an environment of news, business, entertainment and advertising that has systematically discouraged talented men and women from voluntarily *stopping* the creative, exploitative process.

In the twentieth century, the fabricating imagination has become a disease that is carried from culture to culture by a sometimes unconsciously exploitative elite. The creative process itself now often symbolizes and expresses the potentially total, destructive nature and thrust of this culture.



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# *Comments on Academic Politics*

*For the Autumn issue of the* SCHOLAR, *Pandarus outlined, in "One's Own Primer of Academic Politics," his six Principles of Faculty-Administration Polity and his two Antinomies of Pure Administration which, he said, "mark the boundaries and ironies of academic behavior." The comments that we present here were chosen from the wide variety of responses to that article.*

DIOMEDE* writes: Certainly Pandarus has presented us with a highly illuminating statement of what I hope are the generally desired principles, forces and attitudes at work in the area of academic politics. Not the least virtue of his essay is its even-tempered tone. There are, however, three current aspects of this subject, not stressed in his essay, that test one's even-tempered-ness, and that seem seriously to threaten the admirable principles he records.

*Teaching versus Research:* The ideal university faculty member has always been the effective teacher-scholar, and inherited wisdom tells us that the two aspects of that pairing are complementary and equally important. Good research deepens and strengthens the teaching; good teaching tests and helps to disseminate the research. At no time, of course, have all faculty members been ideal—no more have all butchers, bakers and candlestick makers—but this widely honored precept has steadily served to indicate what we all should be. Of late, however, money for graduate study, research and publication has diminished markedly, and the market for Ph.D.s is now almost nonexistent. At the same time, greatly increased emphasis is being placed upon evaluation of teaching, innovation in curriculum, and student participation in the planning of programs. Consequently, in the pairing "teacher-scholar," the first element is ascending and the second is descending. That is, in the politics of faculty appointments and promotions, and in the politics of university budgeting, research holds a lesser place than in the past. Some, of course, will say—not with full justice—"High time; for too long only research was considered." While no one can fail to applaud emphasis on good teaching, the danger is that we may arrive at a situation in which "teacher-scholar" becomes only "teacher."

*The Law Courts:* I am told that the body of "academic law" is very slight. That it should be so is not surprising, for until recently the politics of appointment, promotion, tenure, salary, research leave and the like have rested almost wholly with university faculty and administration. Of late, however, we have seen numerous instances of formal legal proceedings in these areas, so that those matters are no longer settled solely within the university's structure. The law courts make the decisions for us. This development has come about as a result of laws that demand equality of opportunity, representation and treatment for women and minority groups. It is true that in universities—as in almost every

* "This Diomede . . . some men seyn he was of tonge large" (Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, V. 799-805).



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institution, agency and organization this side of Paradise—inequalities exist, and most of us would like to see them abolished. The exact attitudes and the eventual effectiveness of the courts in this matter remain to be seen as the body of academic law grows fatter. But one thing is certain: in a great many of their formerly private political decisions, universities cannot now be unmindful of the presence of the law courts. That those courts are competent to make such decisions is highly debatable.

*Collective Bargaining:* Traditionally, faculty members have considered salary and other working conditions matters to be worked out individually with university officials, chiefly with the department chairman and the dean. Now, however, the unionizing of faculties—including teaching fellows—seems a much more widespread political force than Pandarus indicates. No doubt diminishing budgets, the ever-shrinking dollar, and inflation have been the major causes of this development. Whatever the causes, some faculties have concluded that they can get a larger share collectively than individually of what there is to divide. In this situation one recalls the well-established fact that such collective action inevitably has a leveling effect, in that decisions are generally made across-the-board on mainly quantitative bases such as years of service. Obviously, that effect can mean that the teacher-scholar who attains high distinction locally, nationally and internationally is unlikely to be rewarded much more handsomely than the faculty member who plies his trade without such distinction. When decisions result from collective bargaining, the competitive bidding among universities, so much a part of our professional lives, goes by the board, and merit comes to equal time in grade.

I wish that I could honestly predict the disappearance of the three factors listed above and a return to the good old days, if only we will be patient for a few years. After all, we lived through student revolution, and the universities are now relatively calm. But—Pandarus' even-temperedness to the contrary—I must conclude that what we are going to see in academic politics as a result of these three factors is increasing decay of the good old days, and particularly the loss of many of those noble principles that Pandarus recorded.

*

ROBERT B. HEILMAN, professor of English at the University of Washington, sent us an excerpt from his epic, *The Charliad**:

An Antiphonal Song of the Faculty Senate and the University President

*Senate Sings*

However right that he may be,
We know that we are righter;
However wrong that he may be,
We know that we're unwronger.
If as he should he would admire us,
We could cure his every virus.
We never have a thought of self;
We scorn materialistic pelf;
We'd always pay the highest price
To purge administrative vice.
Thank God we have no lust for power;
Instead we labor every hour
To keep the U. from going sour.

*President Sings*

Oh, Senate, you're so full of virtue,
I ever fear I may besmirch you.
Lest I should cry I try to smile
At something in your weighty style;
Albeit rather sombrely,
You are a kind of comedy.
I don't suppose you really plan it,
But you're my own, my true Mack Senate;
Alas, without a bathing beauty,
But keystone cops on double duty,
Forever chasing over hill and
Dale a presidential villain.

* *The Charliad,* according to Mr. Heilman, "is a jesting, but quite friendly (one reader even called it 'affectionate') account of Charles Odegaard's fifteen years as president of the University of Washington—the hero done in doggerel."



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SANDRA A. WARDEN* writes: The author's "Principle the First" that no one has complete power to do any given thing is true enough but the conclusion drawn from that is that diffusion of authority results in a proliferation of avenues of accomplishment, and any given individual may, in fact, have more personal power. The lack of *de jure* power may permit *de facto* power. (The situation is somewhat analogous to small towns versus large urban areas—what is lost in interpersonal closeness by a move from small to large may well be compensated for by considerable increase in personal freedom.) Pandarus notes that the "administrator's role is political rather than executive"—but who has ever suggested that politicians are powerless? Diffuse channels of authority permit a situation in which a politician/administrator can play the game very cleverly and abide by a principle that says, "If I can't get my way this week under this title, I'll get it next week under another title through another channel."

The author's "Principle the Second" speaks to the essential "deterioriation" of administrative power and "descent" into politics, which is seen to destroy the "symbolic purity" of academic groups. Quite apart from the criticism I offered above of that position, it seems worth noting that the author himself points out, on pages 577-578, in a footnote on page 580, and in his conclusion, that academics thrive on debate and would be bored by the essential repetitiveness of what they do if they couldn't argue, crusade for causes, staunchly defend their own positions and generally engage in academic gamesmanship. How awful (dull) it would be if the system were pure—most academics would hate Heaven. As Pandarus points out, no true academic can tolerate the vacuum of an empty lectern. We'd have to invent politics if they didn't already exist, just to give the place a little spice!

* Sandra A. Warden is associate professor of social psychology at Michigan State University. On leave this academic year, she is working in the office of the chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an administrative intern.

In the author's discussion of nonacademic groups engaged in academic politics, a serious error is made by excluding the maintenance employees. Because this group, more surely than any other, is apt to be unionized and therefore politically aware, these people constitute a major element in the politics of most campuses. They are in a position to paralyze the whole operation by unplugging the phones, turning off the electricity, failing to deliver the mountain of paper, or locking the restrooms—and they know it!

I'm generally disappointed in the level of the "revelation" regarding academic politics. The author stops at noting that their interests conflict. I had hoped for more frankness about the rules of the game: how the pieces are permitted to move, how points are scored, and how opponents are selected and beaten in any given round of play. The essay is well written and readable, but the cloak of anonymity seems unwarranted for such an innocuous "exposé." (I'm reminded of a cartoon in which a politician is worriedly querying his aide: "The papers only call me stupid, a liar, a cheater, a thief. When are they going to start getting nasty?")

*

DR. HARWELL G. DAVIS, JR., of Lloyd Noland Hospital and Clinic in Fairfield, Alabama, writes: I am more than a little curious as to the reason the author of "One's Own Primer of Academic Politics" chose the name of Cressida's uncle for his nom de plume.

Is he suggesting that one must be a bit of a procurer to be the president of an academic institution?

*

ROSEMARY PARK, professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles, and former president of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, writes: I read the article with amusement and pleasure, but must confess that the treatment seems to me



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to be dated. Before 1967-68 it was possible to dissect our academic communities with a light touch. I am less certain that this is appropriate now. There are so many aspects to the problem that are not treated in the delightful piece: for instance, the pressure of outside groups legitimately seeking expertise; the further pressures of families and students for greatly diversified services; and most important of all, of course, the increasing and, I think, nontraditional, anti-intellectual characteristics of the university generation. All this does not mean that the SCHOLAR should not have published the manuscript. Many people would enjoy it and agree with its analysis.

Perhaps I have been too closely associated with the whole process during the tragic developments of the last years. I wish that someone with the same perception would study the power plays within the institution and the negative consequences of many noble aspirations on the part of young faculty and students.



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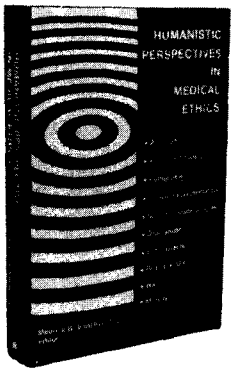


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# *The Revolving Bookstand* . . . . . .

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ROBERT H. ELIAS

THE AMERICANS: THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE. *By Daniel Boorstin. Random House. $10.*

THE IDEA OF FRATERNITY IN AMERICA. *By Wilson Carey McWilliams. University of California Press. $14.95.*

As we approach 1976 and our celebration of time and mortality, we find an intensified need to take stock of ourselves as a people, to reflect upon our collective purposes, to examine our national identity. We study the origins of our political separateness, we scrutinize the paradoxes of our social uniqueness, we evaluate the possibilities of actualizing our distinguishing dream. We may want to know, as Daniel Boorstin does in his *The Americans,* "how dreams made in Europe . . . were dissipated or transformed by the American reality." Or, like Wilson Carey McWilliams in *The Idea of Fraternity in America,* we may contemplate the career of a hope for brotherhood in America to learn what hope we can cling to. But whatever we desire or attempt, we inevitably must comprehend changing conceptions of self and community to discover in those changes something peculiar to ourselves, to our Americanness, and must accordingly judge even the most formidable of historians—at least in part—by the extent to which they contribute to that comprehension.

Boorstin's latest volume, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience,* the climax of his researches, is clearly one of the inescapably major undertakings of recent years. As a conclusion to a trilogy whose first two volumes treat "the colonial experience" and "the national experience," *The Democratic Experience* completes an impressive effort to demonstrate that real history is simply the record of human adjustments to circumstance—or perhaps simply the elaboration of continually changing circumstances. Like the once-celebrated *A History of American Life* that Dixon Ryan Fox and Arthur M. Schlesinger edited some years ago, Boorstin's three-volume *The Americans* is dedicated to the proposition that the stuff of history consists of something quite other than wars, politics, famous men, and great decisions. Ideas and values have, he suggests, little significance in the actual world. The historian must recount how people lived rather than what they lived by or for. Boorstin is the historian as John Dewey, and no historian can quite match him either in his rigorous exclusion of the role of ideas from the story of how our institutions and society developed, or in his diligent display of how

ROBERT H. ELIAS is Goldwin Smith Professor of English Literature and American Studies at Cornell University. His most recent book is *"Entangling Alliances with None": An Essay on the Individual in the American Twenties.*



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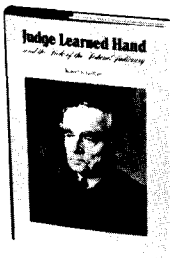


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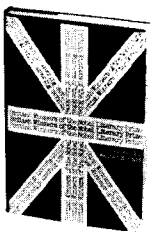

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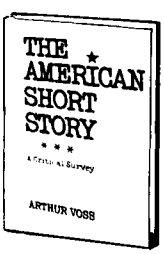


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Americans "learned" by "doing"—and how "learning" was synonymous with "doing."

Boorstin's narrative is rich and compelling—almost convincing—and written as it is with verbal distinction and a commitment ironically ideological, it concentrates a good deal of didactic force against anyone who may entertain the singular notion that what human beings believe truly matters. "America began," he writes in his first volume, "as a sobering experience. The colonies were a disproving ground for utopias." No better proof of sobriety could exist than in such a sacrifice of ideals. New England was "a noble experiment in applied theology." The Puritans' Calvinism "discouraged daydreams." Nobility is contingent on application; dreams are never separable from self-indulgence. Chapter one is entitled "How Orthodoxy Made the Puritans Practical," and chapter five, "How Puritans Resisted the Temptation of Utopia." It is *The New Pilgrim's Progress,* the beginning of a tale by Horatio Alger, Jr. Our hero must first learn to get himself together, and thereafter he must be preoccupied with achievement. Our settlers in Massachusetts were thus, to their undying glory, less concerned with the ends of society than with its organization, less with making the community good than with making it effective. They had to select leaders, distribute power, confront a wilderness. Although one can scarcely quarrel with Boorstin's descriptive accuracy, one cannot avoid wondering about his normative tone.

The tone is, to be sure, inseparable from the theme of the total work. What made George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and others "American," Boorstin declares, "was not what they sought but what they accomplished." The Quakers, for example, accomplished very little. They sought purity of soul; they courted martyrdom for belief; they rejected community whenever community implied an accommodation of this world. They were rigid in their forms of resistance to the rigidity of others. They declined to exercise the governmental powers they possessed. They left others to die on the frontier while they themselves enjoyed security in the settled areas safely removed. Faced by "the most corrosive of tests, the acid of everyday experience," the Quakers failed. They failed because of "overweening purity," because they "set too much store by their dogmas," because finally in the give-and-take of ideas there were some ideas they would not give up. Such a spirit Boorstin can scarcely find "American"; he can label it only "bizarre." He cannot conceive of, or much respect, an unwillingness to compromise; the Quakers' was "one of the greatest lost opportunities in all American history."

A comparable lack of regard for the claims of everyday situations undermined the settlement of Georgia. The London trustees knew nothing first-hand about conditions; yet they presumed to issue directives full of details that could at best be irrelevant and at worst distracting and destructive. No one far from a site could possibly understand what character, skills, land policies, or economic institutions were required for successful colonization. "The opportunities of the New World could not be encompassed by any plan. . . . Even to dream fruitfully of the life here, it was necessary to compound the English dream with the American experience." And to compound a dream with experience was to do both more and less than rationally to weigh values against survival; it was to trust in something ineffable. If the Quakers and Georgians failed very early, the Virginians did not. "An unpredictable alchemy transformed the ways of the English manor-house into the habits of a New World Republic." If ultimately the Virginians also failed, neither dreams nor values could be too much blamed. Boorstin cites "a host of circumstances."

Circumstance is his protagonist, and he continually celebrates those Americans for whom circumstance was sovereign. Or perhaps "necessity" would be a better term, for it is the inventiveness born of necessity that attracts Boorstin's most consistent attention. Generally, this means that Boorstin, throughout most of his chronicle, focuses on American experience as the progressive unfolding of the means for survival. It is tempting to settle for the hypnotic pull of that story.



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During the colonial period life moved into the open air. Intellectual activity was not carried on by a few great minds; it was carried on by innumerable practical ones. Liberation from old constraints meant bringing "all philosophy into the skeptical and earthy arena of daily life." Natural facts, the new geography, the unfamiliar wildlife, the surprising vegetation, all needed to be recorded for use. Knowledge concerned conditions, and contributed to training for immediate tasks. There was a grouping of efforts, a fluidity of status, a support for "the undifferentiated man." The availability of Blackstone's commentaries took law out of the hands of the few; public concern over threatening epidemics required doctors to concentrate on ways to treat particular diseases; the preoccupation with usefulness left Benjamin Franklin and David Rittenhouse to represent American science. Men of letters were "busy" rather than bookish. Culture floated free of a capital. Newpapers supplanted bound tomes. Language became increasingly uniform. Learning and action achieved oneness.

The period between the Revolution and the Civil War was marked by what Boorstin defines as "the search for community," for better ways of living together. But the search was not conscious or characterized by preconceptions. For again circumstances dictated. New Englanders developed close social bonds because they undertook common enterprises and confronted common problems. City dwellers became resourceful at working together to transport granite because they wanted to erect buildings and pave streets. Manufacturers perfected the clusters basic to a versatile factory system because many people wanted an extensive variety of goods. No one sacrificed principles, but no one pursued absolutes. The immediate claimed first attention; adaptability, resourcefulness, and literacy were the prerequisites to effectiveness and therefore were cultivated. Planning, security, health, all essential to group survival, produced the organizer. The organizer helped establish the forerunner of government, the community. The community maintained itself by majority decision because that was most convenient. Convenience dictated the speedy justice of vigilance committees and the eschewing of "legal nicety."

Likewise, a desire for speedy travel led to the construction of railroads. The travelers' yen for fellowship and their need for places to stop encouraged builders to provide hotels on routes that they then encouraged those travelers to use. The rise of businessmen and promoters, the proliferation of small-town newspapers, the mushrooming of regional colleges, the blossoming of the competitive spirit—even the Americanization of language, the flourishing of tall tales, and the extension of the declamatory style in the lyceum, politics and religion—emerged as the products of situations. In fact, the creation of the nation's symbols and models, the mythologizing of Davy Crockett, the canonization of George Washington, the ritualization of patriotic holidays, are not substantially different in significance as products of an inexorable evolutionary process energized by conditions, a process that sometimes operates with imperceptible movements and sometimes by unaccountable suddenness: ". . . the United States somehow became a nation spontaneously."

The "democratic experience," extending without dated divisions from the Civil War to the present moment, provides Boorstin with his happiest opportunity. With fascinated devotion to details, he dwells on the relentlessly glacial standardization of American life that begins with a desire to satisfy wants and culminates in desires that want satisfaction. The trends are familiar enough to social historians. It is not news that the Texas longhorn affected the economy of the Western plains, that go-getters monopolized oil and liquor, that society cohered through consumption. It is not news that statistics defined status, financial, social, and moral; that cities, with expanding and diverse populations, faded along the boundaries and lost their centers; that the private, the personal, and the unique yielded to the public, the mass, and the commonplace. Nor is it news that machinery and invention have been important in the distribution of products, the dissemination of information, the living habits of middle-



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class families, the character of discourse—one could scarcely discuss such matters without reference to the nature of transportation, the communications media, chain stores, or mass education. What is new, rather than news, perhaps, is the vitality that Boorstin's particularity embodies. He can relate the increasing use of glass in buildings to the transformation of the intimacies in daily life, the popularity of self-service food stores to the loss of communal identity, the extension of photographic techniques to the sense of the world that controls how Americans think about distant places and peoples. Like the practical folk whom Boorstin respects, Boorstin shuns abstractions. His account of change is dense with the names of indiduals whose lives provide dramatic emphasis much as John Dos Passos's do in *U.S.A.* No one in the profession surpasses Boorstin in the ability to create witty and penetrating vignettes of both the obvious and the obscure. John D. Rockefeller and Edwin L. Drake, Al Capone and R. G. Dun, Richard Warren Sears and Willis R. Whitney, Lorenzo Delmonico and Cyrus Hamlin—they are numerous. They maintain warmth in a narrative whose conclusion is that warmth has drained out of American society. Right after the Civil War, Americans lived everywhere and gave some identity to where they were; now they are nowhere in particular. For all his commitment to circumstance, by definition neutral, Boorstin at moments so effectively animates the past that he cannot avoid communicating nostalgia—like Nick Carraway's in *The Great Gatsby*—for the past's experience of naïve hope.

Despite all these riches, though, Boorstin leaves us peculiarly deprived. The final impression he produces is not of persons, or even of evolving human struggles for self-determination, but of a landscape with figures in motion. This is what we might look like to the Martians of science fiction—a little the way ants appear to us: How curiously they behave! Here some explore a route and encounter a rocky barrier that seems to repel them, there some touch water and return to their companions, and further along a single one has paused, reaching for and slightly moving the dying body of a dragonfly. Finally, they mingle, regroup, move on, turning from that barrier on the right only to climb one on the left. A mystery indeed!

Boorstin's history is fundamentally for Americans as Martians. His people are always turning from that barrier on the right to the one on the left. Why they do it, what purposes they fulfill, what values they affirm, remains obscure. It is indicative that Boorstin makes frequent use of the passive voice or displays the passive person in presenting what is consequential: "As the community-plans drawn in Europe were changed in each colony, ways common to the colonies began to appear." "The rapid growth of cities put more and more people farther from the sources of fresh milk, meat, and vegetables. . . ." "New institutions grew as the Transients traveled." "By the mid-twentieth century the needs of the automobile had given birth to still another piece of business machinery. . . ." To whom do "ways" "appear"? How does "growth" actually "put" human beings anywhere? How does growth relate to travel? How does a need give birth to machinery? This is not a question of rhetorical shorthand. It is evidence of a systematic effort to exclude the human agent. Persons behave but they do not act. They live, at best, in a state of nature, of prehistory, in which they are never pressed back on each other to resolve inescapable clashes of wills. In this context the Civil War is an occurrence only to be referred to in an occasional phrase (the Spanish-American War does not even achieve that importance). The relationships among the three branches of government are never explored. At the end of *The National Experience* Boorstin touches on the nationalizing of politics, on what his preceding volume-and-a-half prepares for, but with *The Democratic Experience* such concerns effectively vanish. Politics and policies are at best pragmatics, or simply some of the activities people engage in, like eating in Pullman diners or using flush toilets.

No one can deny the force of the account. In strategies of survival the strength of the human will to live can achieve



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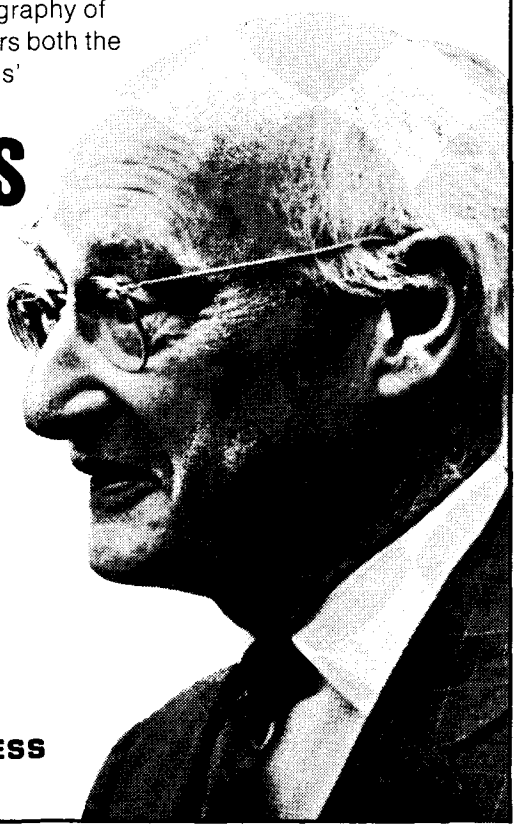
# "Myriad-minded" master.

Coleridge's famed epithet can justly be applied to I. A. Richards — critic, teacher, student of language, poet, philosopher, and mountaineer. Now a score of Richards' students, colleagues, and admirers have contributed essays and poems that reflect the many facets of Richards' life and work, as well as his lasting impact on two generations of writers and scholars. B. F. Skinner, Eric Havelock, Richard Eberhart, Muriel Bradbrook, Richmond Lattimore, Helen Vendler, John Hollander, Robert Penn Warren, and Robert Lowell are among the distinguished group of scholars, critics, and poets whose work is included in this volume, together with Reuben Brower's rare and remarkable interview with Richards and an annotated bibliography of Richards' work. The volume honors both the breadth and depth of I. A. Richards' achievement.



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dignity. It is simply too bad—especially inasmuch as what he writes is otherwise so good—that Boorstin seems willfully to banish from his purview what interests, programs, ideals, or values one or another group of Americans compromised for. After all, there are many ways in which human beings deal with each other in order to assure survival. It is in the particulars of choice, the implied self-conception, that historical meaning lies. For in the end, what is historical relates to the endless redefinitions of selfhood and the multitudinous forms those redefinitions take.

McWilliams's *The Idea of Fraternity in America* would, in this context, appear to constitute a needed complement to Boorstin's trilogy. "For," in the words of the nearly forgotten Denton J. Snider, "History is not merely a line of successive and fortuitous occurrences in Time, but the Soul of all Time, yea, the Soul which makes Time, uttering itself in the events of the past, voicing itself in the deeds and thoughts of men. To hear this voice and to commune with its meaning, may be regarded as the ultimate purpose of historic study." Boorstin's occurrences are not fortuitous, but they are only fortuitously related to the thoughts of men and seldom become deeds. The ideas persons have about themselves seldom surface. One expects them to in a book with McWilliams's title.

To some extent they do. Beginning with the promising assumption that the timeless longing for brotherhood can be "found in the history and letters of America," McWilliams undertakes to document the life of that longing. He clearly sees that the kind of association he is examining involves definitions of selfhood and that those definitions are a consequence of the kind of knowledge he equates with "a continual discovery of the limits of self." But he is fundamentally less interested in the relation of fraternity to the continual discovery of the limits of self than in changing attitudes toward fraternity as a relatively fixed idea. In his first 111 pages, ranging from prehistory and Plato to Freud and Fromm, he describes numerous variants of the fraternal ideal, and concludes by pointing to ways in which the liberal tradition prevented its realization. McWilliams believes that he is thus providing the basis for the discussion that follows. He is quite wrong. The discourse is much too opaque to provide a basis for anything, but it is also, happily, irrelevant. The rest of McWilliams's work does not depend on the preparatory chapters.

Like Boorstin, McWilliams values the sense of community, and like Boorstin, too, he rather prizes the Puritans. The continuity that men like John Winthrop and Cotton Mather found between the physical and the mystical, the priority that they accorded to the integrity of the social group, the way they "always saw the community as a creative force," characterizes a moment in the American past from which, it is obvious, there could be only a decline. When the ministers became concerned with individual providence and visible saints, when Jonathan Edwards emphasized duties to God rather than to men, when the Enlightenment promoted a belief in oneness with "nature" and regarded acquisitiveness as compatible with brotherhood, the libertarian destruction followed: fraternity was sought through spontaneous relations, the private man became glorified, organic neighborhoods disappeared, and, like parodies of the ideal, all sorts of lodges and fraternal orders sprang up. Through the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, the twenties and thirties, and our last decades, McWilliams uncovers what he regards as an increasing loneliness. Whether it was in the social gospel that substituted solidarity for fraternity, whether it was in New Deal reform movements that provided psychological solace, or whether it was in the recent emphasis on "life style" as bond, the individual could find simply superficial substitutes for the fraternity that continues to remain ever out of reach.

There are fine moments in McWilliams's account: the rendering of Emerson's distrust of persons even as Emerson unintentionally authorized privatism, the analysis of the way Horatio Alger, Jr.'s novels evinced an age of insecurity and fading opportunity, the demonstration of the facelessness inherent in Walt Whitman's and Edward Bellamy's notions of brotherhood,



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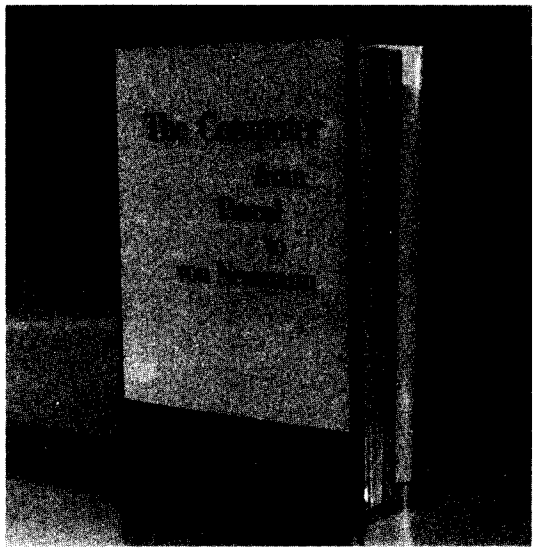

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the elucidation of the importance of *The Prince and the Pauper* for fully understanding *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* and the argument that the twenties were marked by "the desire to exclude any situation in which strong loyalties and commitments might be required." And there are heroes in the account, too: not only John Winthrop, but also Hawthorne, with his insistence that a man is bound to his fellows; Melville, with his thesis that the discovery of human limitation opens the way to perceiving brothers; Mark Twain, with his consciousness of the relationship between freedom and fraternity and his proposition that the true moral sense requires awareness of ignorance and dependence. McWilliams occasionally uses texts that have not been reliably edited, misreads a novel like *The Octopus,* and makes some factual misstatements (he attributes *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* to the 1950s; he includes Angelo Herndon among the Scottsboro defendants, for example). And I do not think he understands the thirties—he may be right about the therapeutic role of participation; he is surely wrong in slighting the redefinition of individuality that Franklin D. Roosevelt catalyzed. But such lapses do not really undermine his contribution in the areas where he is thorough and perceptive any more than do his first hundred pages or, I must complain, his imprecise syntax *passim.*

The most serious weakness is in his approach. For even were he not obscure, McWilliams would be left with a term that cannot be fixed through time, however often the same word may recur. What is timeless stands forever outside of history, just as placelessness does. The historical question cannot be about how fraternity once defined has been repeatedly lost, but about how fraternity has been repeatedly redefined. That is the question McWilliams does not address.

In their failure to confront each age's redefinition of self and community as a central historical question, Boorstin and McWilliams become linked. Both of them succeed in challenging other historians to reflect upon the limits of intellectual history. Both suggest that when ideas are without consequences, they may be without relevance, or that when good ideas yield to bad they may be the creatures of forces beyond ideas. Yet, if one can believe in the imperialism of conditions or the clutch of circumstance, cruel and kind, one discounts at one's peril the ultimacy of ideas as themselves forces and the contention among ideas as an occasion for declaring the meaning of actual moments in particular places, moments when the self defines itself in commitments. Ideas without the limits of the material are airy indeed—or arid—but the material alone congeals at the last into no more than an ice cap across which no figures are finally left to move. On the eve of the bicentennial, then, we can do no better than recall, despite the likely chilling disapproval of our two present fraters in history, what Walt Whitman once said of Snider's intellectual progenitor: "Only Hegel is fit for America—is large enough and free enough."

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Reviewed by MURRAY HARTMAN

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MURRAY HARTMAN's recently completed book, *The Obsessions of Eugene O'Neill,* studies the dramatist's autobiographical and intellectual sources and the relation of his work to modern world theater. He is professor of English at the Brooklyn Center of Long Island University.



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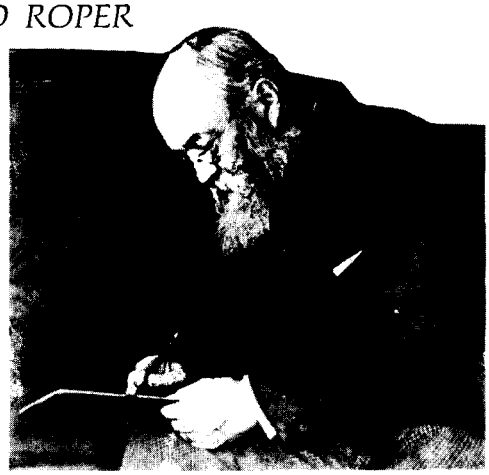

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final volume, will probably be the standard biography for years to come.

This is due partly to its comprehensiveness growing out of prodigious research. The author, former drama critic of the *Brooklyn Eagle,* labored to exhume mounds of hitherto inaccessible or forgotten documents and to interview the most obscure creatures who ever brushed elbows with O'Neill—for example, a ship's steward who helped the dramatist and his Carlotta to debark after their Eastern hegira in 1930. Sheaffer's researches took him to three continents, and his list of acknowledgments runs to eight dense pages. Coming twenty years after O'Neill's death, the publication date was fortuitously timely: without the interviews with many who have since departed, much would have been lost to knowledge. The deaths within the last three years of O'Neill's second and third wives have made more documents available, and now none of these people could inhibit publication of the frank and often hellish disclosures.

Of course Sheaffer has drawn heavily and unavoidably on published sources, but has given concise treatment to information already known, such as the relationship between the playwright and Agnes Boulton O'Neill. And while Sheaffer offers no essential or profound revelations not previously surmised, there are sharp new perspectives about O'Neill's character and those in his orbit that throw light on many of the plays.

The first volume, *O'Neill: Son and Playwright* (1968), traced the O'Neill saga from the grandfather's family, poverty-scarred and abandoned; through the playwright's father, James, who fought his way up to theatrical stardom and then betrayed his gifts to commercial success; through the mother's genteel Catholic upbringing, drug addiction, and self-withdrawal; Eugene's early years of unrequited parental love, alienation, revolt and profligacy; up to the time of his marriage to Agnes and the launching of his professional career with *Beyond the Horizon* in 1920.

The present volume takes us through O'Neill's growth as an innovative artist attended by the flowering of his reputation at home and abroad, while he tried to cope with the successive deaths of his parents and brother, his terrifying bouts with alcohol, his marital and professional difficulties, his abduction by and surrender to the redoubtable Carlotta Monterey, and his final artistic achievements and personal catastrophe.

Sheaffer generates much new information on O'Neill's private and professional life. In explanation of the title, we are advised that "the primary image of Eugene O'Neill that emerges from his writings is that of an eternal son, a man constantly examining and dramatizing his ambivalent feelings toward his mother and father, forever bound to them emotionally, a man never able to mature fully, never free to be a real parent himself. In a basic sense, he was free only to be a writer, a man trying to make peace with himself." As a consequence, many of his plays reflect the sensitive son in the toils of the umbilical cord—notably *Desire Under the Elms, The Great God Brown* and *Long Day's Journey into Night.*

Contrary to the prevailing notion that Eugene tended to champion his mother against his tyrannical father, Sheaffer maintains that the unwanted son hated James O'Neill less than he showed, hated Ella more than he showed. During his brief psychotherapy at the age of thirty-eight, for example, he told Dr. Hamilton that his mother's drug habit had been the main reason for family discord. "The difference between the parents' images," the biographer states, "develops from the fact that O'Neill eventually 'forgave' his father but never, no matter how hard he tried or what he may have thought, his mother." Sheaffer presses his case against Ella: she "never approved of her son's marriage . . . chiefly because [Agnes] was not Catholic." There is outside evidence that Ella soon became deeply fond of Agnes Boulton; Sheaffer overlooks a typical letter to "Dearest Eugene" after the birth of her grandson, showing her concern about Agnes's difficult delivery: "Take good care of her and don't let her want for anything for she is a darling girl. . . ." The probable truth is that O'Neill was equally ambivalent toward



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both his parents—a critical matter because it colored his relationships with the women in his life and especially the man-woman predicament in his plays.

Insecurity and mercurial changes of mood typified the dramatist's adult behavior. He could be pathologically withdrawn in one milieu and join a drunken singing party in another; be tender and loving and suddenly abuse his woman violently; be miserly with his discarded wife and children and quietly support a destitute friend for decades. His misogyny, partly a legacy from Strindberg and Nietzsche, was obsessive. "He used to shunt onto Agnes responsibilities that should have been his as head of the family"—and go on to declare that a loving woman would give her life for her man. He was unable to face a crisis, to visit his mother or his brother when they were dying, or cope with the desperate problems of his sons, whom he cast off—following a kind of family curse. He oscillated between self-righteousness and agonizing guilt.

About O'Neill's third and last wife there is much new material, sometimes shocking, most of it confirming her domineering nature. The biographer found access to the hitherto wary Carlotta Monterey, but checked her vehement declarations against other evidence. In many ways she was a perversely ideal mate for O'Neill. An unwanted child like him, she grew up with the same compulsive fears and tantrums, the same jealous possessiveness, the same inability to love her offspring, the same need for self-justification. Determined, after her uncertain past as an actress, to possess and bridle Pegasus, she abducted the dramatist from his family and became the mother-wife he craved. She did all the unpleasant chores, and he found all chores unpleasant. She groomed his clothes and manners, literally built and guarded his palace walls, intercepted his mail, amputated disreputable friends and relatives, and almost succeeded in reducing the black Irishman to a gentleman.

In gratitude he submitted to her, until isolation made their mutual abrasions unbearable and turned their once rhapsodic union into a Strindbergian dance of death. Among Sheaffer's harrowing vignettes is one describing an altercation that drove O'Neill from the house. Afterwards, Carlotta, seeing him lying in the snow with a broken arm, said, "How the mighty are fallen!" and shut the door. Both were removed to a hospital for bromide poisoning of the brain. There were mutual accusations, separations, lawsuits. In the end, tormented by his infirmities and professional frustrations, he returned to her as the only one on whom he could foist his dying body. His plays were a self-fulfilling prophecy of the great man falling low—an Emperor Jones, an Ephraim Cabot, a Lazarus. And suddenly Sheaffer's biography has soared into the realm of tragedy.

What light does all of this throw on his plays? In addition to those already mentioned, there are the attraction-repulsion theme of *Welded,* the misunderstood Oedipus of *Dynamo,* the embattled artist of *The Great God Brown,* the healing mother-mistress of *A Moon for the Misbegotten,* the purgatorial autobiography of *Long Day's Journey into Night.* The book offers new real-life sources for O'Neill's dramatic personages: five different men formed the model for the Emperor Jones, and a newspaper executive for Hickey the Iceman. O'Neill had the assiduous work habits of a Trappist monk. Tradition has it that his plays act better than they read; but according to Sheaffer, "his plays, even his failures on the stage, always turned a profit between book covers. . . . *Dynamo,* which all the critics had panned, sold about 17,000 copies." As to literary sources, Sheaffer mentions some of O'Neill's borrowings from Conrad, Ibsen and Strindberg, but these are generally known.

In the face of the author's awesome labors, are quibbles indecent? One would be over his style, which while mainly clear and workmanlike, sometimes sinks into tired journalese or verbal slag: "He [O'Neill] always wrote from his guts." Upon his mother's death "Eugene felt within him an aching void."

More regrettable is the sparseness of comment on the growth of the dramatist's mind. He was, after all, an omnivorous reader and a sporadic student of the important theatrical, sociopolitical, psycholog-



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# *The 1973 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards*

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REFLECTIONS ON THE CAUSES OF HUMAN MISERY & UPON CERTAIN PROPOSALS TO ELIMINATE THEM. *By Barrington Moore. Beacon Press. $7.95; paper, $2.95.*

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ical and religious currents of his time—interests that allowed him to become one of the representative voices of the century. Is there room for such matters in this already heavy tome? A definitive critique of O'Neill's work should properly be the office of another book, but some coherent picture of O'Neill's intellectual nature must be a part of his biography.

The play criticism, moreover, is often secondhand and on the level of newspaper reviews (incidentally, there is an excellent cross section of these). Sheaffer's ventures into firsthand criticism are generally sensible, occasionally unsure: "Of all the major playwrights, O'Neill is, with little doubt, the most uneven." If Sheaffer had read all the major playwrights, he would have noted far more influences. Paralleling Strindberg, O'Neill's female characters are usually "either bitches or impossibly noble souls." This is imprecise Strindberg, who was fascinated by the "love-hate" syndrome within the same couple, as in *A Dream Play,* or as in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* —a mixture needed to achieve tragic inevitability.

Despite these blemishes, Sheaffer has constructed a solid biographical edifice with implacable devotion to fullness and accuracy of detail—affording us a searching look into the life and soul of America's first dramatist. On balance, therefore, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* is a biography of quality, not soon to be surpassed, and a golden lode for the great critique that remains to be written.

## America's Agony and the Poet's Tyrannous Eye

THE UNWRITTEN WAR. American Writers and the Civil War. *By Daniel Aaron. Knopf. $12.50.*

Reviewed by EARL ROVIT

Daniel Aaron's magisterial study, *The Unwritten War,* is that rarest of scholarly achievements, a book so sensible, so search-

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ing, and so patently *necessary* as to make one wonder why it had not been written many times and many years ago. The crucial historical significance of the Civil War was clearly recognized even before its actual inception. And by 1870 it was already taken for granted that antebellum America and postbellum America were two radically different countries. The older, somewhat bucolic, loosely jointed, rural Republic—free-swinging and freely talking in a plethora of voices—was a distinctly different cultural entity from the increasingly centralized, industrializing, urban nation-state that was its heir. Between the firing on Fort Sumter and the laying down of arms at Appomattox lies an unfathomable hiatus in time and historical momentum. Nor can this discontinuity be explained away in deceptive organic or psychological metaphors. America did not "grow up" between 1861 and 1865; it was not "blooded" like some Kiplingesque regiment; it did not lose its innocence; nor did the American dream then begin to shiver into nightmare. If anything, in fact, something more like the reverse is true: the war may have frozen the myth of America into a static official blazon. Because of the ultimately abortive way the war was interpreted in the American imagination, postwar America could *not* grow up. Both Northerners and Southerners, both the descendants of "pure" American stock and the later immigrants who had never heard of Bull Run or Shiloh, were led to seize upon the mask of innocence and refuse to face reality. Indeed, they were encouraged to turn the operative American dream into a Fourth of July rhetorical fantasy. For, as Professor Aaron powerfully implies, the American artist—Emerson's "poet with tyrannous eye"—failed abysmally in his function, and the far-reaching consequences of his failure may have crippled the national mind even to our own time.

It is a commonplace of literary scholarship to note that this single most dramatic event in our history has successfully eluded poetic or fictional form. We have, it is true, Whitman's *Drum Taps,* Melville's *Battle*



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*Pieces,* a few poems by Henry Timrod and De Forest's novel, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty;* but scarcely anyone would argue that these possess the scope and intensity and imaginative grip to bestow a whole image on the ravaging war and the ravaged national spirit that suffered the war. More curious, however, the war remained "unwritten" by the successive generations of writers who appeared after 1865. No one even remotely like a Tolstoy or Hugo arrived on the scene to offer a healing shape to the shapeless wound that had riven the country in substance and heritage. Aaron scrutinizes with care and sympathy the enormous body of materials that has accumulated—diaries and memoirs as well as the novels and poems. He shows how evangelistic theorists on both sides were prepared to transform the concrete horror of the actual bloodletting into their own political and metaphysical abstractions. He focuses patiently on what was actually written, and in his evaluations, he enables us to understand just how much the epic poet would have to possess and how much he would have to surrender in order to project the war whole. And at the conclusion of his examination, we are made painfully aware that over a century later, our situation has not changed that much. The war remains unwritten because we are still unable to deal with its human challenges.

There are, of course, obvious reasons for this failure. There may simply not have existed a writer or group of writers with the talent and the vision to integrate profoundly divisive issues with whole hearts and minds. The extraordinary afflatus of creative energy that informed the American "renaissance" was already at its ebb in the late 1850s. The next significant generation of writers (Adams, James, Clemens, Howells, Cable) seems to have been socially and psychologically inhibited from dealing with the conflict directly. Nineteenth-century readers may have been overfastidious or they may have been unwilling to examine too closely what they were determined to understand in their own ways. Aaron demonstrates convincingly that both North and South were eager to compromise the bitter reality of their ordeal by mythicizing the war—effectively falsifying the Union victory and the Confederate defeat. And underlying his keen analysis of each writer's attempt to assess the national wound is the quiet thesis on which his inquiry rests: the war could not be absorbed in imaginative terms because neither the white North nor the white South could honestly face the human fact of the Negro. Both could, and did, deal compulsively with the issue of slavery —as an idea, an institution, an economic and sociological problem. But with Negroes as living people, the American imagination was impotent; it could not reach beyond those brutal or sentimentalized stereotypes of negritude that were employed in order to avoid human responses.

Professor Aaron's book forcibly suggests the extent to which our culture has suffered from this failure. Auden was doubtless right: poetry makes nothing happen. But poetry can provide for new possibilities of attitude, and new attitudes do make things happen differently. Without the imagined possibilities that poets offer, men are inevitably locked in stances of rigid denial. The Civil War remains a fact—the single most traumatic fact in our history. And to this fact we have attended sectionally and collectively with exhaustive patience and passion. But in its factuality, the Civil War has evaded creative transcendence. Toward the end of his great elegy on Lincoln, Whitman talks of standing with the knowledge of death on one side of him and the thought of death on the other. On one side is the intransigent fact, the brutal actuality; on the other is the human mastery of the fact, the creative comprehension. It is the second that allows him to live healthily with the first, and it is this kind of creative mastery that our culture has not yet been able to attain over the Civil War. I wonder if it can yet be done. I do not know. Perhaps only a black writer could now possess both the fierce passion and the peculiar equanimity to cast that poet's tyrannous eye on America's long festering agony. Or perhaps we have



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lost our chance to redeem our own history. Surely it is one of the measures of the excellence of Professor Aaron's painstaking and brilliant study that these questions reverberate in an immediate relevance to our own very different but scarcely less wounded times.

## Whitman as Aphorist

WALT WHITMAN'S CAMDEN CONVERSATIONS. *Selected and arranged with an introduction by Walter Teller. Rutgers University Press. $9.*

Reviewed by JOHN SEELYE

There is a bardic strain in the best American poetry, and in the nineteenth century the best American poet was Walt Whitman. The bard grown old loses the power —physical and psychical—that forces words into new shapes, but he becomes oracular in an oral vein, his vision assuming a new guise. Whitman, virtually confined to his room in Camden by a paralytic stroke during his last years, was fortunate in having had someone—a young writer named Horace Traubel—willing to record his "conversations"—pronunciamentos, really—and as he was fortunate, so should we be grateful. Whitman was hardly obscure in his last years, but, as he grumpily observed to Traubel, the newspapers did their best to convey the impression of a dirty old man. He begged his friend to be honest in his accounts, and we may trust that Traubel was, for Walt comes through plain; Walt's faults as well as his beauties are duly observed.

Whitman talking does at times resemble Whitman writing, especially when he gets rolling in his habitual rhythms. "I often reflect," he said of Lincoln—a man with whom he especially identified—"how very different every fellow must have been from

✪ JOHN SEELYE teaches English at the University of Connecticut and is a contributing editor at the *New Republic*. His most recent book is *Dirty Tricks: or Nick Noxin's Natural Nobility*.

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the fellow we come upon in the myths—with the surroundings, the incidents, the push and pull of the concrete moment, all left out or wrongly set forth. It is hard to extract a man's real self—any man—from such a chaotic mass—from such historic debris." Moreover, Whitman seems to have been careful, at least when occasion warranted, to cultivate his own myth, and seems particularly to have expanded on the subject of *Leaves of Grass*, the final "deathbed" edition of which he was proofreading during the time of Traubel's visits:

> That is what I wanted the book to be: to stand for in some sense, to testify to, the multifariousness of the universe—to include, combine, celebrate all: all: not the least jot missed: not the mouthpiece of classes, select cliques, parts, details—the choiceries of literature: no: but all, all: to utter the bad as well as the good—to participate in the common, the outcast, along with the high, the elect: to see care, oversight, everywhere: the divine working through it all: never an ending of intention: the purpose vital, evident, inveterate, to the end.

Whitman was an inveterate self-publicist to the end, also, and by 1888 knew that he had a good chance for a permanent place in American and even world literature, so that whatever Traubel took down would be a matter of record. Such observations as the above are obviously intended for his posterity, which, if glad to receive them, should understand the occasion that inspired them.

More touching and down to earth is Whitman's concern for the men who were at work on his book, "all the fellows—the printer men—all of them (be sure you don't forget the proof-reader)," to whom he sent words of gratitude and gifts of money from time to time. Through Traubel he wanted "to reach the workmen direct—treat with the craftsman without an intermediary—with the man who sets the type, the man who puts it into form, the man who runs the foundry," a gesture which reveals both his instinct for the common man and his interest in the creative act of putting a book together, "having been a printer myself." He could grumble about printers' errors, also, and about the rapacious tribe of publishers, and had hardly a kind word to say about reviewers. Well, this is not surprising, nor particularly novel. What writer has not complained of the reviewer who, "instead of trying to get at the motive of a book or an incident, sets out sharply to abuse a fellow because he don't accomplish what he never aimed for and sometimes would not have if he could"? Whitman, likewise, is often trite enough on such obvious topics as philosophy: "Cheer! Cheer! Is there anything better in this world anywhere than cheer—just cheer? Any religion better?—any art? Just cheer!" And writing: "I hate commas in wrong places." Yet some of his remarks concerning his own art come across to us with strength and freshness: "I have had people say to me: 'Walt, you write as if it was no effort whatever for you to do so.' That may be how it looks but that's not how it is."

But it is Whitman as aphorist who triumphs in these pages, revealing qualities not present in his formal writings, whether poetry or prose. Whitman recognized the woman in himself, considering himself lucky for having "taken after the women of my ancestry . . . the more pregnant [*sic*] forces in our family history," and what he says of "the old woman, [who] is always the best woman, certain other things being equal," may also be said of the old Whitman. Age and adversity acted to compress his wisdom into small space. Thus:

"Most formal funerals are insults: they belittle the dead. If anything should be honest a funeral should be honest."

"My old daddy used to say it's some comfort to a man if he must be an ass anyhow to be his own kind of ass."

"It is wonderful, when you come to think of it, how much of a man is centred in his belly: the belly is the radiant force distributing life."

Truly "the sweet sun has got into all my old bones," and at times it irradiates the dying poet with an inward flame. "Am I not," he asked of his young Jewish friend, "a Biblical fellow myself—born and bred in Hebrewism—the old forerunners, teach-



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ers, prophets?" At times the fire leaps from his mouth:

"God help our liberties when money has finally got our institutions in its clutch."

"While I seem to love America, and wish to see America prosperous, I do not seem able to bring myself to love America, to desire American prosperity, at the expense of some other nation or even of all other nations."

"What do I want with practical politics? Most all the practical politics I see anywhere is practical villainy. . . ."

"The working class is slow to learn—they are cheated, swindled, robbed, pay all the piper's bills and hear none of the music—yet go on year after year putting their robbers back in Congress, in the legislatures, making them mayors and what not."

But that which I prize most among Whitman's observations about America—which, after all, is the essential Whitman—concerns the presidency, for not only is it particularly dis-apropos (thereby twice definitive) of modern occasions, but it reveals Walt's full-handed grasp of the dramatic qualities of the American Republic:

> We have in a sense been fortunate in our Presidents: no matter what their backgrounds may have been the Presidents after they become Presidents have borne themselves well—the whole line of them: carried themselves according to their lights. . . . We are too apt to pause with particulars: the Presidency has a significance, a meaning, broader, higher, than could be imparted to it by any individual however spacious, satisfying. There is no great importance attaching to Presidents regarding them simply as individuals put into the chair after a partisan fight: the Presidency stands for a profounder fact; consider that: detached from that it is an incumbrance indeed, not a lift, to the spirit. We need to enclose the principle of the Presidency in this conception: here is the summing up, the essence, the eventuation, of the will of sixty millions of people of all races, colors, origins, inextricably intermixed: for true or false the sovereign statement of the popular hope. [And the judgment upon it, also.]

I think we are very much in the debt of Horace Traubel for his pains in transcribing Walt Whitman's twilight thoughts. Those transcriptions, published only in part in five volumes over the years from 1908 to 1965, are expensive and difficult to obtain, so we ought to be grateful also to Walter Teller for sifting them through with an acute eye for pungency and relevance, and for arranging them under topics for easy reference. In his other books, most notably perhaps in his remarkable anthology, *Twelve Works of Naive Genius*, Teller has demonstrated that he, like Whitman (his namesake) has "a great emotional respect for the background people—for the folks who are not generally included—for the absentees, the forgotten: the shy nobodies who in the end are best of all." This is nothing if not a democratic impulse, and if that great democrat Walt Whitman was hardly a shy nobody, yet his last words would have been as ephemeral as that cardboard butterfly he held on his immortal finger—nonentities indeed, had it not been for Horace Traubel (who was). Valuable in itself as a handy digest of Whitman's wisdom, the kind of book Walt himself prized, shaped "for the pocket," Teller's compact volume serves also as an introduction to Traubel's record, and perhaps it will inspire some exceptional publisher to make the rest of that record available to the America that Whitman loved.

## Prophet in His Time and Ours

W. E. B. DuBois. *Edited by William M. Tuttle, Jr. Spectrum Books. Paper, $2.45.*

Reviewed by ADDISON GAYLE

Richard Wright's caustic observation that to edit an anthology requires little more than scissors and a jar of paste, has provided an accurate description of many

ADDISON GAYLE, associate professor of English at Bernard Baruch College of the City University of New York, is editor of *The Black Aesthetic* and author of *The Black Situation* and *Oak And Ivy: A Biography Of Paul Laurence Dunbar.*



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anthologies published during the past five years. It is especially true of those dealing with black literature and history. Here, college professors and graduate students, motivated by the prospect of economic gain and academic credit, have glutted the market with anthologies that are void of intellectual merit. This, however, has not always been the case. Works like James Weldon Johnson's *American Negro Poetry* (1922) and Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925) represent the genre at its best. They are superior both in intellectual content and in the analytical skill of their editors.

William Tuttle's anthology, *W. E. B. DuBois,* follows the Johnson-Locke tradition. Divided into three parts, the anthology is both biographical and critical, and enhances the understanding of one of history's greatest men. Through a well-documented introduction, coupled with writings by the subject himself, as well as commentaries by opponents and supporters, DuBois is revealed as scholar, militant, black leader and prophet. The fruits of his scholarship are well known—over ten books, among which are *John Brown* (1906), *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899) and the unforgettable *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). The militant leader is revealed in prose, poetry and fiction, and pinpointed most effectively in a selection from the poem "The Burden of Black Women": "I hate them, Oh!/I hate them well/I hate them, Christ/As I hate hell/If I were God/I'd sound their knell/ This day."

Such sentiments were designed to provoke controversy. DuBois, like all prophets, was a controversial man. Tuttle has managed to capture that aspect of the scholar's nature. Simultaneously, he reveals those intellectual contradictions endemic to the visionary. In parts two and three, "W. E. B. DuBois Viewed by His Contemporaries," and "W. E. B. DuBois in History," DuBois is revealed as a man of antitheses. At one time he is the opponent of Booker Washington's truncated black nationalism, at another, its most ardent supporter; again, he is the anticommunist, later, a proselytizer of the faith. Yet, at all times,


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*by Barrett L. Beer*

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Professor Beer's book examines Northumberland's political career from beginning to end and finds him not much different from his shrewd, lusty, aggressive contemporaries at the brawling center of Tudor politics. A man of modest ability, suffering bouts of self-pity and poor health, he struggled with a range of political, religious, and economic problems that perhaps no English leader could have resolved successfully. And he knew that to err was treason.

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whether as Pan-Africanist or patriotic American, he is the prophet, twisting and turning in many intellectual beds, sampling from many ideological stews, searching always for a higher truth.

Contradictions and controversy aside, for the modern black sensibility, he remains a prophet. His truth, however, would be fully realized only after the melting-pot experiment had failed; only after the futile campaigns for racial justice launched by King and his young followers; only after Northern liberals had replaced white Southerners as the major obstacles to black aspirations. Then, and only then, would black men realize that they would have to go it alone, and that the New Canaan would be brought into being only through their own efforts. Only then would they find that it was the words of DuBois that echoed in their breasts:

> For the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity. . . . If among the gaily-colored banners that deck the broad ramparts of civilization is to hang one uncompromisingly black, then it must be placed there by black hands, fashioned by black heads and hallowed by the travail of 200,000,000 black hearts. . . .

Such ideas, propounded in 1897, make DuBois the ideological forerunner of the brighter, more articulate young men and women of today, make him the intellectual godfather of Imamu Baraka, Mari Evans and Hoyt Fuller. Yet, this aspect of the DuBois legacy is missing from Tuttle's collection. Neither of the contributors to the book's final section, "W. E. B. DuBois in History," adequately assesses DuBois's contribution to the making of the modern black mind.

Today, black thought has traveled legions from both the futile integrationism of the N.A.A.C.P., and the facile idealism of the Socialist and Communist parties. Thus, Francis Broderick's "The Tragedy of W. E. B. DuBois," evidences an inability to understand the varied dimensions of black thought in the twentieth century:

> W. E. B. DuBois is a lonely and tragic Negro. Once a national audience, Black and white, heard his plea for Negro equality. Now few listen, and fewer still heed him. Once Negro leaders looked to him as the patron saint of their struggle. Now he . . . embarrasses them.

Truman Nelson ("W. E. B. DuBois as a Prophet") views the subject in a more positive light. Yet, here too, DuBois becomes merely the sentimental hero, the martyr to blacks and whites alike:

> . . . in his intellectuality and integrity, in his selflessness and lack of race chauvinism, [he] gave to his own people a sense of their own attainable human grandeur, and to the whites an inescapable reminder of their racial shamelessness.

To assign DuBois a place in history based upon his acceptance by Negro leaders, or by his role as one more Christ figure in blackface, is to do an injustice not only to the man, but to history as well. More than any black man since Frederick Douglass, DuBois's thinking over the centuries—shifting and contradictory as it may have been—has provided the intellectual underpinning for the increasing self-esteem, dignity and racial pride now exhibited by blacks, from college students, to artists, to writers. Those who never knew the man have been influenced by his thought. It is this influence that has spread throughout black communities, producing renewed dedication to the preservation of the singular culture and vision of black people.

Nevertheless, the shortcomings of the final section do not lessen Tuttle's accomplishment. In a sense, they serve to illuminate it; for those who would adequately assess DuBois's place in history need only read Tuttle's book, and then read Imamu Baraka's *Raise Race Rays Raze* (1971) and Don L. Lee's *From Plan to Planet* (1972). In the works of the two younger writers, the influence of DuBois is unmistakable. DuBois—man and prophet—lives on, a towering figure, forerunner of those who have devoted their lives to explicating the souls of black folk.



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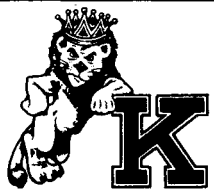

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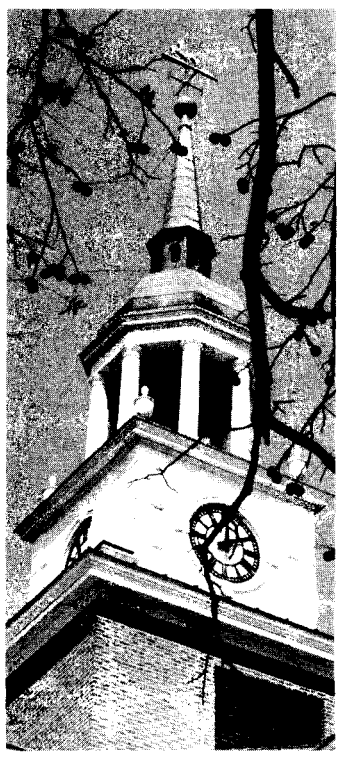




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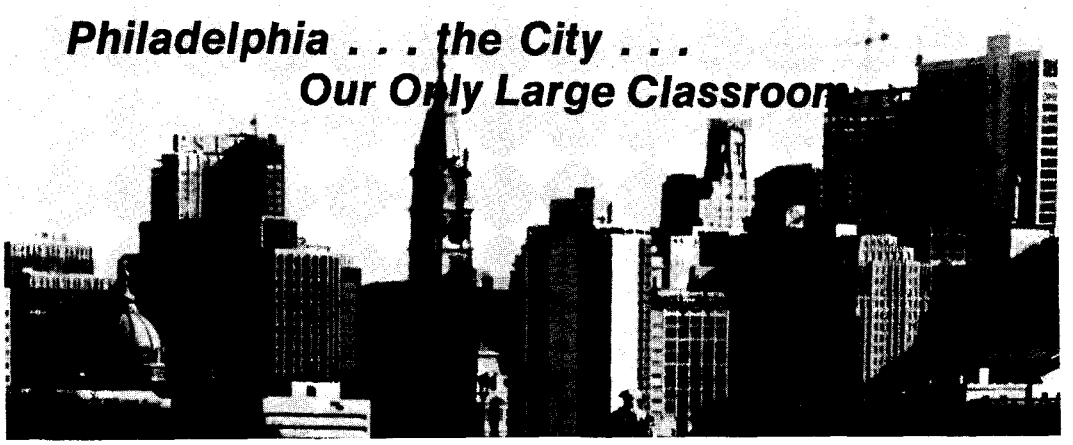

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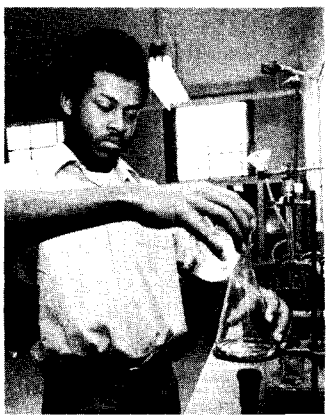

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# *The Reader Replies*

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles that have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *1811 Q Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20009. Because of space limitations we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*
—EDITOR

While I found much to agree with in Mortimer Smith's article, "Educational Innovations: Treasure and Dross" (Winter, 1973/74) and much that was provocative, there are at least two statements I hesitate to accept. First, I do not believe that all of those attempting to incorporate "feelings" into schooling assert the "supremacy of feeling over intellect." Some seem only to be asserting that the body cannot be separated from the mind. People are not just intellects, but human beings. Asserting that is not, by definition, anti-intellectual, and may only be a call for eliminating a false dichotomy.

Second, I do not believe that, by definition, bright high school students make better teachers than mediocre high school students, as implied by Mr. Smith. In fact, high scores on tests and good grades do not seem prerequisite to teaching success. An article in the October issue of *Change,* "Selecting and Training Teachers," concluded: "In short, the good teacher is a good person. All the research, all the Chi squares and defined parameters that attempt to isolate singular factors—all point to this simple truism." Brightness may be part of the good person, but it is not the whole story.

CAROL VALENTINE
Corvallis, Oregon

MR. SMITH replies: I agree, of course, with Carol Valentine's statement about feeling and intellect. They do not exist as separate "entities" but complement each other, the mind providing a guide to the feelings. Unfortunately, far too many advocates of "affective" education do not see the balanced relationship but celebrate the sensory over the cerebral.

I part company with Miss Valentine if she really believes that mediocre students develop into just as good teachers as bright students. On the lowest level of schooling, I suppose teachers of quite modest intellectual attainments can impart the rote subjects. You don't need a Comenius to teach the multiplication table. But a developing adolescent, exposed to more sophisticated subject matter, needs more intellectual stimulation than a first-grader. His education will be livelier (more fun, even) if he is exposed to be a reasonably bright teacher who knows his subject than if he is put under the handicap of trying to learn from a plodding and unimaginative mediocrity, no matter how "good" a person that teacher may be.

* * *

I expect that you will be flooded with letters suggesting additions to Roger Sale's fascinating list of "Unknown Novels" (Winter, 1973/74). I am more concerned with his omissions at the upper reaches of the literary pyramid. Surely Walker Percy, author of *The Moviegoer, The Last Gentleman* and *Love in the Ruins,* belongs at Sale's "level 2." And why isn't Larry McMurty's name near the top of "level 3"? Although McMurty has gained a measure of fame through the filming of *Horseman, Pass By (Hud)* and *The Last Picture Show,* his *Leaving Cheyenne, Moving On* and *All My Friends Are Going to Be Strangers*—not to mention his fine collection of essays on Texas, *In a Narrow Grave*—are difficult to find and thus too little read by the general public.

CAM WALKER
Department of History
College of William and Mary

* * *

I commend you for running Roger Sale's fine article, "Unknown Novels." This sort of activity in my opinion is always welcome and quite valuable. Having just read and enjoyed *Weeds* by Edith Summers Kelley (happily revived through the efforts of Matthew J. Bruccoli) I share and appreciate his concern for overlooked novelists. My favorite candidate for rediscovery is Vance Bourjaily. One wonders why *Brill Among the Ruins* (1970) did not stir up more reaction.

Has anyone else ever read Alma Routsong? Her two novels, *A Gradual Joy* (Houghton, 1953, out of print) and *Round Shape* (Houghton, 1959, out of print), received decent if mixed reviews. She now seems to have vanished. Ms. Routsong is not even listed in *Contemporary Authors* (Detroit, Gale Research, 1962- ), which usually lists everybody. Yet *A Gradual*



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*Joy* is one of the best "campus" novels I have ever read, is one of the few novels to deal realistically with the "G.I. Bill of Rights" student life-style, and is also a very believable love story. I seem to own the only hardback copy in a private library, and it is often hard to locate in large public library systems.

I am a college librarian and just looking through the stacks at the novels for the first half of the twentieth century would certainly cause me to hesitate before attempting a novel. How many writers are there who flourished and now sit on the shelves just gathering dust. Will they ever be rediscovered? There's always hope. Ford M. Ford was finally relocated. I think that some notice is again focusing on Ruth Suckow. But there are so many; and certainly not all of them are undeserving of readers.

ROBERT S. BRAVARD
Lock Haven State College
Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

* * *

Professor Heilman presents some interesting points in his article, "Holiday Highway Deaths Fall Below Record," in the Winter 1973/74 issue. In some instances, however, he's charging windmills while patronizing his readers.

His discussion of the Electra is a case in point. First, he tells us who Electra is, and then he tells us that Electras are purchased because they conjur up an image of merciless knife wielding. From this we can deduce that Buick buyers are acquainted with Electra, but that readers of the SCHOLAR are not.

I think it likely that in the world of big car buyers the name Electra is associated with electricity, not with Greek tragedy. Thus the subconscious association is with the hum of a dynamo, inexorable power and ultimate velocity. The average Electra owner knows no more of Electra than he does of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl.

In identifying many car names with our more aggressive tendencies, Professor Heilman correctly notes that car baptizers do not try to sell us cars named Spoon or Salmon or Cow, et cetera.

True. But neither do they try to sell us cars named Hammerhead Shark, Eagle or Stiletto—names that are easily associated with the aggressive impulse. So the omission of certain names is of little importance unless we can isolate the rules used in name selection.

In line with this, Professor Heilman's article contains allusions to militant Indians (Pontiac), cavalry (Le Sabre), and warhorses (Charger). But we do not call a car Crazy Horse, although that Indian—now being immortalized with his charger on the side of a Dakota mountain—was a militant and a brilliant exponent of light cavalry.

Why not? Because he doesn't fit the rules for name selection. What then are the rules?

If Detroit has a little manual entitled "Car Names, Selection of," it probably reads like this:

Primary Criterion: Brevity

Secondary Criterion: Euphony. If necessary, accepted words can be distorted if the result is more euphonious. Thus, tornado can be twisted into Toronado. The additional vowel improves the word while aiding in conjuring up the distant rumble of rolling thunder.

Tertiary Criteria (at least one of which must apply): Dynamism (Fury); masculinity (Mustang); sophistication (Coupe de Ville); status (Newport); the cosmos (Nova); and grand illusion (El Dorado).

Exclusions: Any name that is gauche, common, vulgar or otherwise identifiable with a prospective buyer.

DANIEL B. DALLAS
East Detroit, Michigan

* * *

At the outset I want to express my high regard and admiration for René Dubos's writings, which I have followed, and read, for several years. Both in his books and his articles in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR I have valued the reasoned, historic data he has provided in an effort to explain that man has always "manipulated" his environment.

In the Autumn issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR I have applauded Dr. Dubos's comments on the "kitchen middins," from which anthropologists have been able to deduce a variety of data concerning early man. And he has convinced me that "the peculiar form of [man's] sloppiness" is no new manifestitation. In this and other of his writings where he expresses a positive, comforting, and indeed, hopeful, view of human nature, I do concur, but today we are facing problems for which there are no precedents.

The pollution of rivers and oceans, the destructions of fish and birds through lethal chemicals and the introduction of awesomely perilous atomic wastes into the environment are a unique phenomenon and these, even with



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some remedial attention to some of our water pollution, pose menacing consequences.

Man is durable in nature, but will he be able to withstand possible exposure to atomic wastes? What might happen, do you think, if an atomic power plant were to explode, not an unlikely possibility? As far as we know the earth has never been so heavily populated; can it continue to absorb the astronomic quantities of waste that accumulate daily? Jacques Cousteau is not an alarmist, yet he has cautioned the world at the deplorable filth of the oceans.

I believe these are valid questions and pose valid fears. In Ecclesiastes we are assured that "there is nothing new under the sun." I find it difficult to obtain comfort from the very real hazards that face us. Something *new* has been added.

SYLVIA DAY
Woodstock, New York

* * *

Fine going on "Watergate: One End, But Which?" in the Autumn SCHOLAR. I'd still think the answer to Gerald Johnson's question is that this democracy can go a few miles and years further. If more than even odds are asked, though, someone else will have to bank the bet.

On page 597 Mr. Johnson says that Mr. Nixon "was a member of the administration while the Bay of Pigs fiasco was being organized, and if he knew nothing about it, it must be because he never read the newspapers. . . ."

If I may be allowed the correction, the case was stronger than that. As disclosed recently—for one place in E. Howard Hunt, Jr.'s account of his part in the Bay of Pigs operation, as quoted by Tad Szulc in the *New York Times Magazine* of June 3, 1973—Vice-President Nixon in the closing months of the Eisenhower administration was "the action offier within the White House" on the Cuban invasion project. Hunt was told of this in the spring of 1960 by General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., the vice-president's military aide at the time, at a lunch during which Cushman assured Hunt of Mr. Nixon's interest, and offered his help as needed at any hour of the day or night. Hunt found "the General's confirmation of high-level interest and good will reassuring."

As "Eduardo," Hunt was chief C.I.A. liaison officer with the Cuban counterrevolutionaries for more than a year and a half. His overappraisal of anti-Castro fervor within Cuba—and presumably salesmanship on the point


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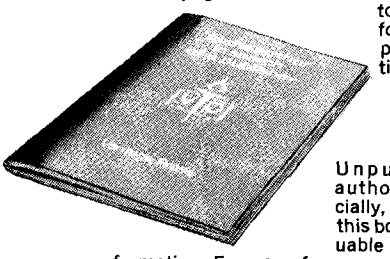

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with our military men—can probably be blamed as much as any other single factor for the final Bay of Pigs disaster. The embarrassment at that failure led in turn, I'm afraid, to some of the extra machismo President Kennedy showed in the early stages of Vietnam when General Taylor and others were calling for a less cracked trumpet.

However little Hunt and other invasion seekers needed firing up, a measurable assist of some sort was supplied them early by Mr. Nixon, if his deputy spoke accurately for him. A resulting question: how much of the Vietnam tragedy at its start may now fairly be traced directly or indirectly to Mr. Nixon on the strength of the encouragement he gave Hunt in those critical weeks while "Eduardo" was assuring the C.I.A. and the Pentagon that Castro was an emperor without clothes or dependable followers?

CHARLES O'NEILL
Green Farms, Connecticut

* * *

To Gerald Johnson: This letter is specifically triggered by your "Watergate" article in the Autumn issue, but it really is a taking out on you of exasperation at two gaps in the essays of several.

Preliminarily, my biases: lawyer, Midwest born and reared, but card-carrying Democrat (my father thought the party stood for low tariffs and booze). Last August after the Miami horrors, did serious thinking and made tough decision to back McGovern despite all (in power many jerks grow up; wishful remembrance of fellow Hoosier Wilkie's admission that it was all lies) over Nixon (no principles as best illustrated by August 15, 1971; can't tell the flacks and flakes from the real producers; basically incompetent administration). Would still vote again for Dewey over Truman; always felt that Adlai would be a lousy executive but loved him; have been heard to applaud Ike's better moments (farm, Indochina and Congo).

First, the MANDATE of November '72. "Nevertheless, the fact remains that he was the people's choice. . . ." That is as good a reading of the facts as the straight-faced repetition in the Los Angeles newspapers of the Ziegler handout that Nixon was so gratified at the personal support from his home state when the very next column said that California gave him one percent less votes than the national average.

The message of the 1972 vote is that Nixon only got 62 percent. If the Republicans had run an Ike or even a Calvin Coolidge, they should have gotten 90 per cent. Even the minorities thought the Democrats were weird.

Quit lashing people for going out and voting the only way that was made to seem sensible to them. It was not because they supported that s.o.b.

Second: "Why was the war extended into Cambodia?" You ask it in the same way as others, implying an insidious motive. Hell, it was the flailing of one who was as dumb as JFK in expecting guidance from the Pentagon, and had missed the chance to take Aiken's advice and declare a victory and get out. Yes, it was evil, but it was dumb-evil, not evil-evil.

I've enjoyed your articles in this magazine and elsewhere. At least you know they are read.

WILLIAM K. BACHELDER
Newport Beach, California

* * *

I submit "A Resolution of Realms" for publication as a lyrical addendum to Daniel Bell's "Technology, Nature and Society" (Summer, 1973). The poem indicates an agreement with the fact of, indeed, the implied good of exponential change; nevertheless, it suggests that man's options often paralyze him, leaving him no conscious occasion but retreat.

### A Resolution of Realms

That garbled medium, mind against itself,
Connived, survived an ever-swelling ratio,
Concealed, revealed its limitations,
Coped, hoped to list one true law,
When
Our realms closed in round us,
Spheres crashing into the One,
And all our ideologies came tumbling down.

Having brooked despair,
Time's tireless palm opened
To the least garbled mind;
Having vanquished rarity,
Nature's breast burst forth
To her lone survivor;
Having jostled Her self-conscious telos,
Sending it crashing against obstruction,

Prometheus straightened his collar and
returned to work.

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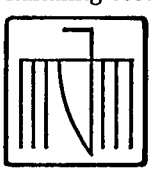

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